UNPACKING "ALBERTA BEEF": CLASS, GENDER, AND CULTURE IN EDMONTON PACKINGHOUSES DURING THE ERA OF NATIONAL PATTERN BARGAINING, 1947-1979

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Abstract

The struggle to establish a progressive American-based industrial union, United Packinghouse Workers of America, in Edmonton's four major packinghouses during World War Two sparked the "awakening" of a social conscience in many workers who embraced the goals of strengthening the labour movement and promoting working-class political activism. The impact of this working-class community on electoral politics, however, was limited to a significant degree by notions of gender difference. The most successful politician to come out of an Alberta packinghouse was Ethel Wilson, a seamstress in the laundry department at Edmonton's Burns plant, who rose through municipal and provincial politics to become a cabinet minister in the anti-union Social Credit government of Ernest Manning, while a number of packing men were unable to achieve electoral success.

Drawing on a wide array of sources, including oral interviews, union and government records, and newspapers, I argue that notions of gender difference intersected with class and ethnicity to handicap packing men and women in distinctive ways linked to a national system of pattern bargaining that gave them unprecedented trade union power during the decades following World War Two. During these years workers tended to support male leaders who could be aggressive, even bullying and dictatorial. This masculinist leadership style was most effective in confrontations with the powerful companies that comprised Canada's "meat trust," particularly Canada Packers, and with the province's increasingly right-wing provincial government, but it often marginalized progressive voices in the union and excluded women almost entirely from the most powerful leadership positions. Conversely, in community politics, the aggressive image of packing masculinity was a liability that did not handicap Ethel Wilson, who was able to achieve success by downplaying her union credentials and trading on an image of respectable white Anglo-Canadian femininity.

Acknowledgements

Completion of this project, which has had a lengthy gestation period, is a testament to the enthusiasm, encouragement, and support of many different people, not least, the individuals I was fortunate enough to interview. Their participation made an in-depth study possible; their words and historical images enlivened the text immeasurably, and their warmth, generosity and humour enriched the research process for me. I also want to acknowledge the support of UFCW leaders, in both the Edmonton (Local 1118) and Toronto offices, where I was given access to union records, publications, and other research materials.

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My research was greatly assisted by the efforts of Jonathan Davidson at the Provincial Archives of Alberta and Susan Stanton at Edmonton Municipal Archives. I also benefited from the collegiality of Ian MacLachlan, who shared his own interviews with former packing industry management figures. Alberta Labour History Institute's substantial and growing collection of interviews made available online proved to be a valuable resource

to me as a researcher living outside the province. Living in Toronto gave me access to a number of reading groups where rigorous and invigorating discussion of my own work, but also the work of many others, got my creative juices flowing. I am especially indebted to members of the Toronto Labour History group and the York University Gender and Women's History group. I am also grateful to Lisa Hoffman and Karen Dancy for cheerfully shepherding me through York's labyrinthine administrative channels. I greatly appreciated financial support from Ontario Graduate Scholarship program and a variety of York University Faculty of Graduate Studies and Department of History funds.

I am most indebted to my family, particularly my partner Tom, and my children, Patricia, James and Emily -- all of whom have made the trek to York University's Scott Library at one time or another (some repeatedly) to help me input and crunch data. Most importantly, they accepted me unconditionally, even when "me" included passionate engagement with a large, unwieldy, demanding, and seemingly never-ending thesis.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

List of Acronyms

CFAW	Canadian Food and Allied Workers
EMA	Edmonton Municipal Archives
GMM	General Membership Meeting (Minutes)
LAC	Library and Archives of Canada
Local 233	Burns Foods Ltd., Edmonton
Local 243	Canada Packers, Edmonton
Local 280	Swift Canadian, Edmonton
Local 319	Gainers Limited, Edmonton
PAA	Provincial Archives of Alberta
UFAW	United Food and Allied Workers Union
UFCW	United Food and Commercial Workers Union
WHS	Wisconsin Historical Society

Note: An asterisk (*) indicates the use of a pseudonym

Chapter One: Introduction -- Unpacking "Alberta Beef"

In the summer of 1947 two executive members of the union local at Edmonton's Burns packinghouse were bullied into withdrawing their names from the slate of candidates vying to become a delegate to national contract negotiations in Toronto. Ethel Wilson, a seamstress in the Laundry Department who was vice president of the local, and Chief Steward Len Burton were members of United Packinghouse Workers of America (UPWA), which had displaced craft unionism in Edmonton's four packinghouses during World War Two by emphasizing inclusiveness, democratic processes, egalitarianism and political activism. Bill Chrapko, a skilled worker, had recently wrested control of the local's executive from Wilson, who had been active in promoting the rights of women workers. His unruly supporters had made it difficult to maintain "law and order" during union meetings. According to a staff report at the time written by Jack Hampson, UPWA's Alberta representative, Wilson and Burton "were nominated but were intimidated to the point where they refused to stand."[1]

Although little is known of Len Burton, there is much to suggest that Ethel Wilson was an outspoken and assertive trade unionist who was not easily intimidated. Wilson, a single parent with three children, was the only packing woman in Edmonton to become vice president of her union local and to hold influential positions in the local labour movement. During an illegal national meatpacking strike a few months after the union hall incident she intervened in a high level meeting between the union and government leaders to keep Jack

[1] Jack Hampson, "Alberta Staff Reports, Locals 233-422," (LAC, CFAW fonds, MG 28 I-186, PWOC and UPWA series, Vol 24, 1947-50). Local 233, 11 Aug 1947.

Hampson out of jail.[2] In an interview thirty years later Hampson gave Wilson full credit for standing up to Alberta Premier Ernest Manning and his labour minister when they tried to intimidate Hampson by threatening to lay charges: "I remember Ethel Wilson saying, 'Well, as long as Jack Hampson's in jail you'll never kill a hog. I can guarantee you that.'"[3] Ethel Wilson's assertiveness and political acumen under pressure that day paid off for packinghouse workers because the government backed down and the strike's success in Alberta strengthened worker confidence in the union and helped put in place a national system of pattern bargaining that gave workers in Canada's meatpacking industry unprecedented labour power for several decades.

The irony is that Ethel Wilson soon gave up union work and turned her considerable leadership skills to community politics, where she became the most successful politician to come out of any Alberta packinghouse. Wilson was elected to Edmonton city council seven times during the 1950s and 60s and, after entering provincial politics as a candidate for the notoriously anti-union Social Credit party, became the first woman to be made a cabinet minister in the government of Ernest Manning. **[Figure 1]** As Jack Hampson explained with some bewilderment, "then Ethel was to turn around and become a Minister of that government, but I never could tie it all together."[4] During the decades following World War Two when packing workers were able to sustain a significant degree of trade union power, no other Edmonton packing unionist -- all of whom were men -- achieved electoral success, not

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[2] The provincial governments in Alberta and Saskatchewan intended to end the strike by seizing the packinghouses, as the governments in Prince Edward Island and Quebec had done. In Quebec a number of union officials were jailed. John Tait Montague, "Trade Unionism in the Canadian Meat Packing Industry" (Ph.D., University of Toronto, 1950). 233

[3] Jack Hampson, Interview Transcript (Edmonton: Provincial Archives of Alberta, Warren Caragata fonds, PR1980.0218/19A, 1978).

[4] *Ibid.*

even Hampson, a high profile union figure who ran unsuccessfully in the 1948 provincial election as an Edmonton candidate for the Canadian Commonwealth Federation (CCF).

The 1947 incident of union hall intimidation together with Ethel Wilson's paradoxical career raise questions about the material and ideological bases of class identity in Edmonton packinghouses. This research examines the particular configuration of class, gender, and ethnicity within Edmonton's packinghouses to consider the ways in which it both fostered and constrained gender and class activism. Through the process of exploring worker subjectivity and identities I try to understand how the particularities of time and place informed union activism and the response of labour in all its diversity. Drawing on union records, government documents, some company records, but particularly interviews and photographs, the study is grounded in the tradition of working class social history, which seeks to understand the consciousness and experience of ordinary people and everyday life to expand our awareness of power dynamics in a patriarchal capitalist industrial system.[5]

Edmonton packing workers formed one of Alberta's most vibrant and militant working-class communities during the decades following World War Two. This study traces the development of "Packingtown"[6] in North Edmonton and local unionization from 1904 when John Gainer built the first packinghouse in South Edmonton until 1979 when Burns Foods was the first of Canada's Big Three packing companies -- which included Canada Packers and Swift Canadian -- to shut down their packinghouse in North Edmonton. The 1979 shutdown dramatically shifted the balance of power between capital and labour in the

[5] Early examples of the "new" social history include: E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London: Gollancz, 1980). Herbert Gutman, "Work, Culture, and Society in Industrializing America, 1815-1919," *American Historical Review* 78, no. 3 (1974).

[6] The term Packingtown was used during the early part of the twentieth century, but had fallen into disuse by World War Two. Alex Mair, "Where in the World Was Packingtown?," *Edmonton Journal* 1992.

local packing industry. Although I discuss briefly early attempts to unionize and the struggle for industrial unionism, my focus is on the period from 1947 to 1979 when the class cohesion and militancy of Canadian packinghouse workers helped enforce a national system of pattern bargaining that allowed them to secure an unprecedented degree of job security, some voice in their workplace, and remarkable wage gains that were especially dramatic for women workers. For the first time many packing families in Edmonton were able to buy a home, buy a car, educate their children beyond high school, and travel. In a province distinctive for its conservative political culture the national system of pattern bargaining in Canada's meatpacking industry strengthened the hand of Edmonton packing workers for several decades against a hostile government, as well as powerful companies that were national in scope. This historical study of Edmonton packinghouse workers provides a window into broader developments in mid-twentieth century Canada, including the increasing industrialization and corporate dominance of Canada's meat industry, the role of the state in shaping a national oligopoly in Canadian food manufacturing, and regionalism, as well as working-class culture, ethnic and sexual divisions of labour, the rise of industrial unionism, the long-term impact of postwar legislation recognizing unions and, most centrally, the significance for management and labour of a national system of pattern bargaining that was unusual in North America.

Scholarship on the meat industry in Canada, particularly Alberta, has tended to feature ranching or male entrepreneurism and focus on cowboys, cattle barons, or maverick financiers who have long held mythic appeal as symbols of masculine freedom, rugged

individualism, or capitalist success.[7] Similarly, the history of Alberta has focused on the region's rural tradition of fur trading, European agricultural settlement, and resource development. Elizabeth Jameson and Sheila McManus have noted that the dominant figures in these historical narratives have been white males, from fur traders and pioneer farmers to railroad entrepreneurs and mining magnates.[8] This image was reinforced following World War Two despite the dramatic economic boom triggered by a major oil strike at Leduc, just outside Edmonton, in February 1947, which transformed the economy of Edmonton and Alberta virtually overnight.[9] Alvin Finkel has observed that the a second dramatic burst of economic activity in Alberta during the 1970s after the Organization for Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) cut oil production, generated a "peculiar" political culture dominated by an image of the province as "a modern version of the Wild West" because of its economic opportunities. He emphasized that this image was at odds with the reality that Alberta had suddenly become an "urban, industrial and increasingly multicultural society." The myth,

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[7] Hugh Aylmer Dempsey, *The Golden Age of the Canadian Cowboy : An Illustrated History* (Saskatoon: Fifth House, 1995). Grant MacEwan, *Pat Burns, Cattle King* (Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1979); Henry C. Klassen, "Entrepreneurship in the Canadian West: The Enterprises of A.E. Cross, 1886-1920," *The Western Historical Quarterly* 22, no. 3 (1991); Albert Frederick Sproule, "The Role of Patrick Burns in the Development of Western Canada" (M.A., University of Alberta, 1962); Michael Bliss, *A Canadian Millionaire : The Life and Business Times of Sir Joseph Flavelle, Bart., 1858-1939*, 1st paperback ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992); Maxwell Foran, *Trails and Trials : Markets and Land Use in the Alberta Cattle Industry, 1881-1948* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2003). Some more recent studies have taken an approach that highlights complexity and diversity, but they do not look at the meatpacking industry. See Simon Evans, *Cowboys, Ranchers and the Cattle Business: Cross-Border Perspectives on Ranching History* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2000). Melanie Buddle's recent work, which spotlights female entrepreneurism in one part of the Canadian West, helps make explicit the gendered way in which entrepreneurism has been imagined. Melanie Buddle, *The Business of Women : Marriage, Family, and Entrepreneurship in British Columbia 1901-51* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010).

[8] Elizabeth Jameson and Sheila McManus, *One Step over the Line : Toward a History of Women in the North American Wests* (Edmonton; Athabasca: University of Alberta Press ; AU Press, 2008). xv

[9] Edmonton was one of the fastest growing cities in North America during the postwar decades, growing from a population of 94,000 in 1941 to 532,000 by 1981. P.J. Smith, "Planning for Residential Growth since the 1940s," in *Edmonton: The Life of a City*, ed. Bob Hesketh and Frances Swyripa (Edmonton: NeWest Publishers Limited, 1995). 245

nurtured by "voices of the well-off and the middle classes," encouraged even recent arrivals to identify with "a nostalgic view of the province as a frontier, cowboy society, where individualism reigned supreme and the interventions of an outside government were unwelcome."[10]

It seems no accident that in 1988, just as Canada's meat industry was restructuring using new technologies to intensify both cattle production and the slaughter and packing of beef, Alberta Beef Producers (ABP) launched its bucolic advertising campaign, "Alberta Beef." The slogan for this campaign, "if it ain't Alberta, it ain't beef," was accompanied by an image of three "traditional lean and laconic cowboys" set against a backdrop of rolling Alberta ranch land and distant mountain peaks. The slogan's rural drawl and cowboys' tight jeans tapped into popular pre-modern images of male virility in the Canadian West to give the province's beef industry a highly romanticized and masculinist "public face" that contrasted starkly with the industry's new reality, which included factory farms, much larger packinghouses and a rising number of workers who were women or non-white immigrants.[11] "Unpacking Alberta Beef" is an historical study that counters these idealized images of Alberta and its meat industry, instead drawing attention to the diversity of ordinary packing workers engaged in often divided collectivist struggles to improve their terms of work and safeguard their family economy against the economic vicissitudes of industrial capitalism.

Although Edmonton has played an important role in Canada's meatpacking industry and in Alberta's economy and labour movement, this piece of the city's industrial history has attracted little scholarly attention. Henry Klassen has pointed out that until World War Two

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[10] Alvin Finkel, *Our Lives : Canada after 1945* (Toronto: J. Lorimer, 1997). 222-223

[11] Alberta Beef Producers, http://albertabeef.org/consumers/marketing-campaigns/; Norma Ramage, "Alberta Beef Tries out New Brand," *Marketing Magazine* 106, no. 27 (2001).

meatpackers like Pat Burns had some of the largest industrial establishments in the Canadian West. Klassen's focus, however, is on entrepreneurism, including the management strategies of meatpacking companies.[12] My study views these packinghouses as an important site for the "making" of an urban working class in a province that was predominantly rural until the 1960s, and traces its evolution through the expansive postwar era, which, in Alberta, extended through the 1970s.

Theoretical Debates

This study operates from a materialist feminist framework of analysis, but incorporates important insights from poststructuralist theory. I see historical change as primarily material in nature, and gendered, racialized class relations as central aspects of social relations. Class is used here to signify structured economic inequality, not as a single, monolithic concept, but as "a field that always contains multiple and contested meanings."[13] Drawing on powerful poststructural critiques of objectivity and centralized power, I accept that all knowledge, including historical knowledge, is socially constructed, and power is diffuse and is negotiated by all historical actors, although not equally.[14] Identities and social relations are not inevitable, but rather unstable, and profoundly historical in that they are a function of a particular time and place. Joy Parr's emphasis on fluctuation, fragmentation, and multiplicity has demonstrated that analytic concepts and categories are diverse and unstable. For example, Parr has demonstrated that, "We exist simultaneously, rather than sequentially, in the social relations of class and gender," and different aspects of our

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[12] Henry C. Klassen, *A Business History of Alberta* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 1999). 115
[13] Joan Wallach Scott, "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis," in *Gender and the Politics of History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988). 88
[14] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 1st American ed. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978).

multivalent identities come to the fore depending on the particular historical context.[15] In exploring how constructions of class, gender, and race or ethnicity within Edmonton's working-class packing community varied from place to place and across time my research reinforces these theoretical insights. This study is also influenced by the work of feminist historians who continue to see the concept of experience as "useful," in particular Joan Sangster, who has cautioned that it be explored "as a layered process that is both lived and construed; as both a point of origin and as discursively constructed; as a dialectic of both 'first and third person' perspectives."[16]

As a materialist and culturalist feminist I am interested in relations of power between workers and management, but also among workers on the shop floor, in the union hall, and within packinghouse families, to expand our understanding of how social hierarchies, particularly those of class, gender, and race or ethnicity, are constructed and reproduced in ways that affect the material conditions of people's lives. Culture is central to the analysis because, as Elizabeth Jameson has explained, it is an important arena where "people make their own history through daily acts" by choosing to "either preserve or transform existing social relationships and cultural meanings."[17] Thinking of culture as a resource that workers drew on to construct their lives acknowledges a degree of agency in human existence within

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[15] Joy Parr, *The Gender of Breadwinners: Women, Men, and Change in Two Industrial Towns, 1880-1950* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990). 8. See also Elsa Barkley Brown, "'What Has Happened Here': The Politics of Difference in Women's History and Feminist Politics," *Feminist Studies* 18, no. 2 (1992).

[16] Joan Sangster, *Transforming Labour: Women and Work in Post-War Canada,* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 14.

[17] Elizabeth Jameson, *All That Glitters : Class, Conflict, and Community in Cripple Creek* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998). 10

the structural forces that constrained them.[18] As a social historian I have looked for historical change in the "daily acts" of rank and file workers, as much as union leaders, in the household and community, as well as the workplace. Worker subjectivities are a major focus of analysis because they help us understand how individual men and women choose among competing cultural discourses to construct meanings that challenge or reproduce social hierarchies, particularly differences of class, gender, race and ethnicity. As Peggy Pascoe has explained, the concepts of identity, experience, and agency, however contentious, are essential vehicles for giving voice to the subaltern.[19]

A broad conceptualization of "work" and "workers" is central to this analysis. "Work" includes unpaid as well as paid, reproductive as well as productive roles, while "workers" refers to both male and female workers' in terms of their marital status and role in the family economy, as well as their status as autonomous wage earners. Traditional labour studies operating within a male framework of analysis have assumed male breadwinning and female dependency are the norm, which has rendered the concept of "work" and "workers" male in the popular imagination. The labour of women workers has often been overlooked in both the formal economy and especially in the informal economy, particularly the household.[20] As a result, feminist historians have argued convincingly for an analytic framework that encompasses the unpaid labour performed in the household, most often by

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[18] Susan Porter Benson, *Counter Cultures : Saleswomen, Managers, and Customers in American Department Stores, 1890-1940* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986). 2-3. See also, Kathleen Canning, "Feminist History after the Linguistic Turn: Historicizing Discourse and Experience," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 19, no. 2 (1994). Nan Enstad, *Ladies of Labor, Girls of Adventure : Working Women, Popular Culture, and Labor Politics at the Turn of the Twentieth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999).

[19] Peggy Pascoe, "Race, Gender and Intercultural Relations:The Case of Interracial Marriage," in *Writing the Range: Race, Class and Culture in the Women's West*, ed. Elizabeth Jameson and Susan Armitage (Norman and London: University of Oklahoma Press, 1997).

[20] Joy Parr and Mark Rosenfeld, eds., *Gender and History in Canada* (Toronto: Copp Clark,1996). 2

women, as well as wage labour to more fully understand family strategies of survival and the processes by which the working-classes are reproduced on a daily basis and generationally. Bettina Bradbury, Franca Iacovetta, and others have demonstrated the importance of women's traditional strategies such as taking in laundry or boarders and growing vegetables as well as stretching meagre wages to ensure the financial survival of the working-class family.[21] They have encouraged researchers to consider a worker's marital status, stage in the life cycle, and role in the family economy to better understand their class consciousness and perspective. As Alice Kessler-Harris has explained, focusing on the family and community reveals women's centrality to class relations "as agents of social reproduction, maintainers of households, income extenders, and wage earners."[22]

Studying workers as sons or daughters, siblings, spouses, and parents, helps break down the artificial divide between productive and reproductive responsibilities that has rendered invisible the double work day of paid and unpaid labour performed disproportionately by women, and its effect on their lives and working-class activism. Exploring property inheritance patterns, job alternatives and educational opportunities it is possible to establish ways in which, for example, young women entered a different labour market than their brothers. Similarly, it is possible to see why working-class sons and daughters began their work lives with lower levels of education than did their middle class cohort. In combination, these analytic tools and methodologies help delineate the sources of cohesion and cleavage among Edmonton packing workers, providing a more nuanced

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[21] Bettina Bradbury, *Working Families : Age, Gender, and Daily Survival in Industrializing Montreal* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1993). Franca Iacovetta, *Such Hardworking People : Italian Immigrants in Postwar Toronto* (Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993).
[22] Alice Kessler-Harris, *Gendering Labor History* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2007). 7

understanding of the way they saw themselves, the forces that constrained them, and the spaces within which they acted. This more holistic analytic framework reveals important sources of identity that affected decisions made on the shop floor and in the union hall as well as the voting booth.[23]

Although this is not an in depth study of packing district neighbourhoods, in paying some attention to the community, my analysis is influenced by studies that have helped reveal the diversity of structural forces and the complex interplay of structure and agency that shape the identities, culture, and activism of men and women in working-class communities. These studies have demonstrated the importance of locating "working-class organization in the web of social relationships that knit a specific community."[24] They also challenge the notion of workplaces and households as "unitary or stable in either time or space"[25] to expand our understanding of changing constructions of gender, ethnic, and class relations, yet without "particularizing" the past to the point where the idea of a continuous and "explainable" history is undermined.[26] My research examines the culture of the family, and to a more limited extent the community, as well as the workplace and the union hall, to enhance our appreciation of both material considerations and the values and ideals that shaped the solidarity and militancy of Edmonton's meatpacking workers. In particular, it examines the ways in which gender influenced workplace cultures, household dynamics, union politics, labour relations, and the political promise of this working-class community in the decades following World War Two.

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[23] Jameson, *All That Glitters : Class, Conflict, and Community in Cripple Creek*. 8
[24] *Ibid.* 7-8
[25] Parr, *Gender of Breadwinners*. 231
[26] Sangster, *Earning Respect*. 4

The work of Joan Sangster, Meg Luxton, and others has explored continuity and change in postwar Canadian family economies, documenting smaller families, earlier marriage, and more complex life cycle patterns for women as a growing number of women stayed in the workforce after marriage or took time out of the paid workforce while raising their children, but returned to wage labour in their 30s or 40s.[27] Their research makes explicit the lack of support for working women in popular culture, social policy and the corporate environment in the postwar decades and demonstrates a persistent gender division of labour in the household. It also suggests that most working-class families continued to rely on income generated by women either in the home -- babysitting for others, taking in sewing etc... -- or, increasingly, working part-time outside the home. Bryan Palmer has argued that patterns of consumption in postwar working-class families that were more dependent on a male wage dampened class consciousness by fostering "an insular, family-centred culture of consumption" with women's wages more easily constructed as "pin money."[28] My research contributes to these discussions of the postwar family economy by exploring the gender dynamics and household strategies of Edmonton packing families, who displayed a sustained militancy through the 1970s.

This research also contributes to an international body of socialist-feminist labour history that examines the distinct occupational experiences of women workers. A vigorous debate in the late twentieth century about the relationship between patriarchy and capitalism as oppressive structural forces shaping women's work spurred feminist scholars to develop

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[27] Ibid; Meg Luxton, *More Than a Labour of Love : Three Generations of Women's Work in the Home* (Toronto: Women's Educational Press, 1980); Meg Luxton and June Shirley Corman, *Getting by in Hard Times : Gendered Labour at Home and on the Job* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001).
[28] Bryan D. Palmer, *Working-Class Experience : Rethinking the History of Canadian Labour, 1800-1991*, 2nd -- ed. (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1992). 329

their analyses by more effectively integrating class and gender to examine why women's work, both paid and unpaid, was constructed as less valuable and less skilled than work performed by men.[29] I apply this feminist lens to the gender division of labour, gender constructions of "skill," and unequal wages in Edmonton packinghouses and the Canadian meatpacking industry more broadly. Sangster and others have also emphasized the importance of considering why in some situations women workers "accommodated" themselves to gender discrimination, and in other contexts they resisted it. In taking up these questions in relation to Edmonton packing women, my research builds on this literature by illuminating the lives of female Canadian manufacturing workers, particularly in the West.

Much of the scholarship on women workers in the postwar decades has focused on Central Canada, a region that industrialized the earliest and most extensively. Research on the Canadian West reveals that, compared to other parts of the country, the region's accelerated rate of industrialization and urbanization during the first half of the twentieth century "exacerbated and amplified" middle-class anxieties about women's growing involvement in wage labour.[30] Yet most of the studies of working-class women in the Canadian West have focused on women outside Alberta or examine an earlier period.[31] Some years ago Patricia Roome lamented the "brief glimpse" of packing women's activism

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[29] Joan Kelly, *Women, History, and Theory: The Essays of Joan Kelly* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984). Chapter Three; Sangster, *Earning Respect.*

[30] Lindsey McMaster, *Working Girls in the West : Representations of Wage-Earning Women* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2008). 2.

[31] Barbara Latham and Roberta Jane Pazdro, eds., *Not Just Pin Money : Selected Essays on the History of Women's Work in British Columbia* (Victoria, B.C.: Camosun College,1984). Mary Kinnear, *A Female Economy : Women's Work in a Prairie Province, 1870-1970* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1998). One exception is my study of a 1947 strike by pottery workers in Medicine Hat, Alberta. Cynthia Loch-Drake, "Jailed Heroes and Kitchen Heroines: Class, Gender, and the Medalta Potteries Strike in Postwar Alberta," in *One Step over the Line: Toward a History of Women in the North American Wests*, ed. Elizabeth Jameson and Sheila McManus (Edmonton/Athabasca: University of Alberta Press/University of Athabasca, 2008).

during World War Two in the official history of Alberta labour, and called for more studies that make women wage workers in Alberta "the subject of research."[32] In exploring the lives of Edmonton packing women, this study contributes to our understanding of how women wage workers responded to the particular pressures they experienced during the postwar decades in one of the most dynamic urban centres in the Canadian West.

In speaking to the intersection of women and workplace activism, particularly the activism of union women, my research contributes to several debates among feminist labour historians. One concerns the degree to which the activism of particular groups of women workers was motivated by their identity as women, as workers, or because of loyalty to a particular ethnic group.[33] My research contributes to this debate by exploring the importance of class, gender, and ethnicity in fostering or inhibiting the activism of Edmonton's women packing workers relative to individual agency. Another debate among historians of women has cautioned me to examine packing women's actions on their own terms, when exploring ways in which they challenged limits imposed by their gender. I acknowledge that none of the Edmonton women interviewed self-identified as "feminist" and it is unlikely that they would have viewed their actions in that light.

I have also sought to understand packing women's particular notions of respectability, recognizing that working-class women have their own understandings of respectability, which are not simply an attempt to emulate middle-class values and can

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[32] Patricia Roome, "Remembering Together: Reclaiming Alberta Women's Past," in *Standing on New Ground: Women in Alberta*, ed. Catherine Cavahaugh (Edmonton: University of Alberta, 1993). 189. One exception is Catherine Cole's historical study of women workers in Edmonton's GWG textile plant who unionized remarkably early in the twentieth century. Catherine Cole, "Garment Manufacturing in Edmonton," in *Edmonton: The Life of a City*, ed. Bob Hesketh and Francis Swyripa (Edmonton: NeWest Publishers Ltd., 1995).

[33] Ruth A. Frager, *Sweatshop Strife : Class, Ethnicity, and Gender in the Jewish Labour Movement of Toronto, 1900-1939* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992).

influence their labour activism.[34] My research looks at how notions of respectability affected the labour activism of packing women in Edmonton. In the American literature on packing women Dennis Deslippe and Bruce Fehn have demonstrated that the strong leadership of African American women whose gender analysis was deepened by their experience of race activism, helped trigger organized resistance as women were affected disproportionately by layoffs from new technologies in the 1950s and 60s.[35] In applying race and ethnicity as well as gender and class to the topic of Edmonton packing women, my research contributes to scholarship that helps make explicit the distinctive ways in which race was constructed in a particular Canadian context.

As unionized workers in the postwar era, Edmonton packing women were part of a small but significant female minority within the workforce at the time because of their potential to leverage union power around issues of importance to women workers.[36] A growing feminist scholarship has examined trade unionism as an environment that helped to produce and reinforce a racialized and gendered workplace in which women dominated the lower ranks of the job hierarchy and people of colour were largely excluded, sparking distinctive types of trade union feminism.[37] In particular, Joan Sangster has explored the

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[34] Parr, *Gender of Breadwinners*. Frager, *Sweatshop Strife*.

[35] Dennis A. Deslippe, *Rights, Not Roses : Unions and the Rise of Working-Class Feminism, 1945-80* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000); Bruce Fehn, "Striking Women: Gender Race and Class in the United Packinghouse Workers of America (UPWA), 1938-1968" (Ph.D., University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1991).

[36] Julie White, *Sisters and Solidarity : Women and Unions in Canada* (Toronto: Thompson Educational Pub., 1993). The number of Canadian women workers who were unionized rose from fifteen per cent in the 1940s to thirty per cent by the 1970s.

[37] Gillian Laura Creese, *Contracting Masculinity: Gender, Class, and Race in a White-Collar Union, 1944-1994* (Don Mills, Ont.: Oxford University Press Canada, 1999). Parr, *Gender of Breadwinners*; Sangster, *Earning Respect*; Pamela H. Sugiman, *Labour's Dilemma: The Gender Politics of Auto Workers in Canada, 1937-1979* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994); Julie Guard, "The "Woman Question" in Canadian Unionism: Women in the UE, 1930s to 1960s" (Ph.D., University of Toronto, 1994). Susanne

ways in which women packing workers in Canada used the grievance and arbitration system instituted under the postwar "Fordist Accord" between labour and capital, and how their experience was different from that of male workers.[38] Her work offers insight into how well the postwar system of labour relations served women workers. My examination of women workers in one community has allowed me to contextualize Edmonton packing women's grievances by drawing on a variety of textual records, but also by conducting interviews. This approach yields insight into the identities, perspective, and agency of packing women, as well as how effectively they were able to mobilize the new grievance and arbitration system for their own purposes. It also critically assesses the brief flowering of an inter-plant packing women's organization that emerged among activist Edmonton packing women in the 1950s.

This study contributes to gender history by exploring how gender conditioned the structure and management of Edmonton's meatpacking industry, and the lives of workers in the packinghouse, the union hall, the household and the community. As Joy Parr and Mark Rosenfeld have explained, gender history is distinctive in its ability to "bring to light hidden but influential assumptions about gender," such as the postwar welfare state's assumptions about male breadwinning and female dependence.[39] My research historically contextualizes the particular notions of masculinity and femininity that operated in Edmonton packinghouses, tracking change over time.

Klausen, "The Plywood Girls: Women and Gender Ideology at the Port Alberni Plywood Plant, 1942-1991," *Labour/Le Travail* 41, no. Spring (1998).

[38] Joan Sangster, "Discipline and Grieve: Gendering the Fordist Accord," in *Transforming Labour: Women and Work in Post-War Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010).

[39] Parr and Rosenfeld, eds., *Gender and History in Canada.* 2

Joan Wallach Scott has emphasized that gender is also used as "a primary way of signifying relationships of power."[40] Carol Adams, a vegetarian who explores the connections between male dominance and meat eating in American culture, argues that feminists have not fully recognized the gendering of meat-eating. She suggests that a patriarchal cultural bias has favoured meat eaters historically, making it difficult to critique the way we eat meat.[41] My study explores the subtle ways gender has been used to signify power in the industrialized production of meat, including the gendered hierarchical ranking of meats, which limited women's access to production jobs on highly masculinized beef, and the masculinist system of national pattern bargaining in the red meat industry.[42] In each instance I have considered how these gendered notions affected relations of power between men and women, and between groups of women or men, intensifying or mediating levels of oppression.

In making gender central to my historical interpretation I have chosen to study men as well as women, which means my research taps into one of the more hotly contested debates in feminist scholarship about the efficacy of gender history versus women's history.[43] Although feminist labour historians agree about the centrality of gender to all working-class history, some historians have chosen to focus on women because of a commitment "to the

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[40] Scott, "Gender: A Useful Category." 42

[41] Carol J. Adams, *The Sexual Politics of Meat: A Feminist-Vegetarian Critical Theory* (New York: Continuum, 1990). 17

[42] Here I am referring to the fact that men have dominated production jobs in beef and to a lesser extent pork, while women have tended to dominate jobs in the poultry industry, reflecting the gendered hierarchical ranking of these meat products.

[43] Joan Sangster, "Beyond Dichotomies: Reassessing Gender History and Women's History in Canada," *Left History* 3, no. 1 (Spring/Summer) (1995); Karen Dubinsky and Lynne Marks, "Beyond Purity: A Response to Sangster," *Left History* 3,4, no. 2,1 (1996); Franca Iacovetta and Linda Kealey, "Women's History, Gender History, and Debating Dichotomies," *Left History* 3,4, no. 2,1 (1996).

recovery of women's stories," while others have paid equal attention to men and women.[44] Critics of gender history have centred on the issue of power, emphasizing gender history's potential to undermine women's history as a vehicle for exposing forces that oppress women, and as a way of rendering women visible in the historical record. Gender history has also been criticized for instigating a dichotomy between the two fields of study that has resulted in a competition for scarce academic resources.[45]

My decision to study men as fully as women was influenced by arguments that examining masculinities promises to dislodge or decentre "the ungendered, universalized male subject."[46] Feminist scholars have come to realize that by largely ignoring the male half of humanity, women's history inadvertently helped to naturalize and render invisible men's gendered behaviour.[47] This gender history is grounded in the idea that identities are made in relationships and masculinity and femininity do not exist in isolation from each other but are deeply embedded in contemporary assumptions about all aspects of identity, particularly class, race, and ethnicity. Feminist scholars have also noted the tendency for studies of masculinities to emphasize diversity but to overlook issues of power. A rich scholarly literature has documented diverse notions of masculinity and begun to critically assess notions of hegemony and power dynamics more generally.[48] My research examines

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[44] Sangster, *Earning Respect*. 5-6; Parr, *Gender of Breadwinners*.
[45] Nancy M. Forestell, Kathryn M. McPherson, and Cecilia Louise Morgan, eds., *Gendered Pasts: Historical Essays in Femininity and Masculinity in Canada* (Don Mills, Ont.: Oxford University Press,1999). 224, footnote 4.
[46] *Ibid.* 5
[47] *Ibid.* 5; Parr and Rosenfeld, eds., *Gender and History in Canada*. Introduction.
[48] R. W. Connell, *Masculinities*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2005); Michael S. Kimmel, Jeff Hearn, and Raewyn Connell, eds., *Handbook of Studies on Men and Masculinities* (Thousand Oaks, CA; London: Sage Publications,2005); David L. Collinson and Jeff Hearn, "Men and Masculinities in Work, Organizations, and Management," in *Handbook of Studies on Men and Masculinities*, ed. Jeff Hearn Michael S. Kimmel, R.W. Connell (Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications, Inc., 2005); Craig

social forces shaping masculinities, but also ways that individuals construct particular notions of masculinity in their day-to-day actions to reinforce or undermine social hierarchies. It identifies distinctive notions of masculinity operating in the packing industry and their impact on packing solidarity, militancy, and the strength of the union's progressive impulse. Finally, by exploring male dominance in union leadership it contributes to the debate about why male dominance relative to women is such a persistent theme in the construction of all masculinities.

Many scholars have demonstrated the explanatory power of studies that investigate historical changes in our understandings of race and ethnicity, which are bound up in class, gender, and often other aspects of identity. On the Canadian Prairies, the efforts of British and Central Canadian authorities to subordinate Aboriginal peoples and impose white institutions such as Christian marriage with European settlement, helped enshrine "whiteness" as a dominant value by the late nineteenth century.[49] The massive immigration of a diversity of east, central and southern Europeans to the West in the early twentieth century only intensified the attachment of an Anglo-Canadian elite to Anglo institutions in the region.[50] Alberta historians have documented the high level of hostility toward some groups of immigrants, particularly Asians, who were deemed "undesireable," and Ukrainians, who were resented for their large numbers, poverty, and perceived resistance to

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Heron, "Boys Will Be Boys: Working-Class Masculinities in the Age of Mass Production," *International Labor and Working-Class History* 69, no. Spring (2006); Ava Baron, "Masculinity, the Embodied Male Worker, and the Historian's Gaze," *International Labor and Working-Class History* 69(2006).

[49] Sarah Carter, *The Importance of Being Monogamous: Marriage and Nation Building in Western Canada to 1915*, 1st ed. (Edmonton and Athabasca: University of Alberta Press ; AU Press, 2008).

[50] Catherine Anne Cavanaugh and R. R. Warne, eds., *Telling Tales: Essays in Western Women's History* (Vancouver: UBC Press,2000). 12

assimilation.[51] Much less has been written, however, about changing notions of race and ethnicity in Alberta during the decades after World War Two. This research on Edmonton packinghouse workers contributes to the history of racialization and ethnicization in Alberta by exploring a working-class labour force that was more ethnically diverse than the general population and included women. Since Anglo Canadians were a major group within the packing workforce, this study explores the processes by which Anglo-whiteness was both produced and challenged. The research also contributes to the "re-imagining" of Ukrainian Canadians by shifting attention away from the stereotype of stalwart pioneering farm families on the Prairies and instead drawing attention to those who were part of the urban working classes. Specifically, it engages with a debate about the image of Ukrainian Canadians as "dangerous foreigners" who "supposedly drank too much and were prone to violence and criminality," by considering the influence within Edmonton packing locals of a historically specific notion of Ukrainian Canadian masculinity during the union's formative years in the mid-twentieth century.[52] More broadly, this study contributes to a growing body of literature that explores the development of a postwar human rights movement by examining the impact of a union in Canada that played a vital role in the American civil rights movement.[53]

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[51] Howard Palmer, *Patterns of Prejudice : Nativism in Alberta* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1982). 27, 28, 170

[52] Rhonda L. Hinther and Jim Mochoruk, eds., *Re-Imagining Ukrainian Canadians: History, Politics and Identity* (Toronto; Buffalo: University of Toronto Press,2011). 5. See also: Gregory Robinson, "Rougher Than Any Other Nationality? Ukrainian Canadians and Crime in Alberta, 1915-29," *Journal of Ukrainian Studies* 16, no. nos. 1-2 (Summer-Winter) (1991). Stacey Zembrzycki, ""I'll Fix You!": Domestic Violence and Murder in a Ukrainian Working-Class Immigrant Community in Northern Ontario," in *Re-Imagining Ukrainian Canadians: History, Politics and Identity*, ed. Rhonda L. Hinther and Jim Mochoruk (Toronto; Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 2011).

[53] Dominique Clément, *Canada's Rights Revolution : Social Movements and Social Change, 1937-82* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2008); Carmela Patrias and Ruth A. Frager, "'This Is Our Country, These Are Our Rights': Minorities and the Origins of Ontario's Human Rights Campaigns," *Canadian Historical Review* 82, no. 1 (2001).

Labour History

In the American context UPWA's democratic processes, sustained militancy, and egalitarian principles, which helped reduce class, race, and gender inequalities among workers, have sparked a considerable body of scholarly literature.[54] New approaches to the study of meatpacking workers at the national and local level have yielded richly textured social histories that explore the racial and gender dynamics of worker relations within the industry, highlighting ways in which race and region intersected with class to shape union politics and class power in the United States. Roger Horowitz argues that the union leadership's goal of eliminating geographic wage differentials was an effort to strengthen the inter-racial alliance between blacks and whites as much as a pragmatic attempt to prevent packing companies from diverting production to lower wage areas of the country because supportive blacks in northern packinghouses were helping to push up the wages of Southern whites.[55] This raises questions about the Canadian meat packing industry where race and ethnicity intersected with class differently. In particular, how did Canadian packing workers respond to their union leadership's emphasis on issues of racial and gender equality? My study also examines the extent to which East Europeans, particularly Ukrainians, were able to achieve leadership positions within an influential working-class community in the West and offers insight into the post-1945 "rights revolution" in Canada. In particular, it analyses the

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[54] James R. Barrett, *Work and Community in the Jungle : Chicago's Packinghouse Workers, 1894-1922*, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987); Shelton Stromquist, *Solidarity and Survival: An Oral History of Iowa Labor in the Twentieth Century* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1993); Rick Halpern, *Down on the Killing Floor: Black and White Workers in Chicago's Packinghouses, 1904-54* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997); Lizabeth Cohen, *Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1939*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

[55] Roger Horowitz, *Negro and White, Unite and Fight!: A Social History of Industrial Unionism in Meatpacking, 1930-90* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997). 234-236

efforts of Edmonton packing workers, particularly women, to press inequality grievances with newly established state human rights institutions when their own union would not support them.[56]

In narrowing their analytic lens to a community or region, several American studies have expanded our understanding of the quality of working-class life, class consciousness, the process of class formation and fragmentation within American packinghouse communities, and their impact on regional politics in the American mid-west.[57] My research explores the nature of political activism in Edmonton packinghouses, characterizing worker attitudes and analysing the impact of these workers on local electoral politics. A number of American studies have focused on women workers and the impact of gender dynamics within the meatpacking industry and its union, particularly African American packing women's leadership role in securing equal pay for women workers, the struggle for seniority rights as industry restructuring eliminated a disproportionate number of "women's" jobs, and the role notions of gender difference played in a pivotal 1960s labour dispute that eroded union power.[58] Research on the meatpacking industry in countries outside North America has also explored the intersection of class, gender, and culture.[59] My study speaks to this international

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[56] Clément, *Canada's Rights Revolution : Social Movements and Social Change, 1937-82*; Patrias and Frager, "'This Is Our Country, These Are Our Rights': Minorities and the Origins of Ontario's Human Rights Campaigns."

[57] Barrett, *Work and Community in the Jungle*; Halpern, *Down on the Killing Floor*; Cohen, *Making a New Deal : Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1939*; Warren J. Wilson, *Struggling with "Iowa's Pride": Labor Relations, Unionism, and Politics in the Rural Midwest since 1877* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2000).

[58] Fehn, "Striking Women". Deslippe, *Rights Not Roses*. Debra Fink, *Cutting into the Meatpacking Line: Workers and Change in the Rural Midwest* (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1998).

[59] Marjorie Jerrard, "A Surprising Struggle? The AMIEU (Qld) and the Fight for Equal Wages in the Meat Processing and Export Industry in the 1950s and 1960s," *Labour History [Australia]* 77(1999); John Leckie, "Women in Industrial Action: Some Female Profiles in a Redundancy Strike in Vestey's New Zealand Meat Works, 1988," *Labour History [Australia]* 61(1991). Mirta Zaida Lobato, "Women Workers

literature by considering how gender and race intersected with class in a Canadian context to shape the gender consciousness and activism of packing women. It also considers how gender dynamics affected relations of power between labour and capital.

National pattern bargaining has been a central focus for labour historians studying Canada's meatpacking industry because it marked an era of significant worker power within the system of labour relations that emerged after World War Two. Critics of the postwar labour relations framework have argued that workers gave up too much when they conceded the right to strike during the life of a contract in exchange for union recognition and the right to bargain collectively.[60] Yet as a union with national pattern bargaining, which was unusual within the North American context, UPWA had significant power and influence. Also, unlike most industries, which are concentrated in one province or region, meatpacking plants were located in urban centres from coast to coast, giving them the potential for national influence within the labour movement and Canadian society more generally. The first scholars to focus on the labour history of Canada's meatpacking industry raised questions about union leadership, Canadian autonomy, and the impact of Canadian labour law within the industry's system of national pattern bargaining. Most, however, were writing before a series of national meatpacking labour disputes in the 1960s and 70s. While a close study of national negotiations during this period is beyond the scope of my research, my focus on the system's impact in Edmonton provides insight into the power and influence Canadian

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in the "Cathedrals of Corned Beef"," in *The Gendered Worlds of Latin American Women Workers*, ed. John D. French and Daniel James (Durham and London, 1997: Duke University Press, 1997).

[60] Donald M. Wells, "Origins of Canada's Wagner Model of Industrial Relations: The United Auto Workers in Canada and the Suppression of 'Rank and File Unionism', 1936-1953," *Canadian Journal of Sociology* 20, no. 2 (Spring) (1995). Cy Gonick, Paul Phillips, and Jesse Vorst, eds., *Labour Gains, Labour Pains : Fifty Years of PC 1003* (Winnipeg: Society for Socialist Studies,1995); Craig Heron, *The Canadian Labour Movement: A Brief History*, 2nd ed. (Toronto: J. Lorimer, 1996). 88.

packinghouse workers achieved within it. More recent analyses of national pattern bargaining in Canada's meatpacking industry have emphasized the system's precariousness.[61] The predominant theoretical approach in all of these studies has been a male model of work and labour activism that focuses on the packinghouse, the union hall, and contract negotiations, but overlooks masculinity as a fundamental feature of the postwar labour relations framework.[62]

My research contributes to debates about solidarity, militancy, union leadership, and the progressive impulse of industrial unionism within the postwar labour relations system by foregrounding gender as an important lens of analysis. Feminist scholars have demonstrated that both the postwar system of labour relations and the welfare state designed to support it are profoundly gendered in ways that have privileged male workers.[63] Peter McInnis has observed that, "gender assumptions that secured key union leadership jobs for males were located through a bureaucratic ethos dependent on experts for its direction. This process of

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[61] Anne Forrest, "The Rise and Fall of National Bargaining in the Canadian Meat-Packing Industry," *Relations Industrielles* 44, no. 2 (1989); Ian MacLachlan, *Kill and Chill: Restructuring Canada's Beef Commodity Chain* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001).

[62] John Hanley Grover's study of packing workers in Winnipeg takes a social and cultural approach in considering the intersection of class with other aspects of identity, particularly ethnicity and gender (although not masculinities), in an exploration of the struggle to establish industrial unionism. John Hanley Grover, "Winnipeg Meat Packing Workers' Path to Union Recognition and Collective Bargaining" (M.A., University of Manitoba, 1998).

[63] Ann Porter, *Gendered States Women, Unemployment Insurance, and the Political Economy of the Welfare State in Canada, 1945-1997* (Toronto ; Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 2003); Anne Forrest, ""Securing the Male Breadwinner: A Feminist Interpretation of PC 1003"," in *Labour Gains, Labour Pains: Fifty Years of PC 1003*, ed. Cy; Phillips Gonick, Paul; Vorst , Jesse; (Winnipeg/Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 1995); Julie Guard, "Womanly Innocence and Manly Self-Respect: Gendered Challenges to Labour's Postwar Compromise," in *Labour Gains, Labour Pains: Fifty Years of PC 1003*, ed. Cy; Phillips Gonick, Paul; Vorst , Jesse; (Winnipeg/Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 1995); Jennifer Anne Stephen, *Pick One Intelligent Girl: Employability, Domesticity and the Gendering of Canada's Welfare State, 1939-1947* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007).

specialization was an intrinsically masculine and ostensibly 'rational' undertaking."[64] To date, however, although there have been studies of centralized bargaining systems as a phenomenon of the Postwar Compromise in Canada, there has been little attention to the ways masculinities have operated within these systems.[65] Feminist historians exploring working-class culture and militancy in post-1945 Canada have drawn attention to the ways in which particular notions of working-class masculinity have operated in contract negotiations.[66] Christopher Dummitt has demonstrated that gender is an often overlooked aspect of postwar labour relations that can help explain how working-class radicalism is sometimes dampened by support for modernist values. In the American context, Stephen Norwood has argued that the growing dominance of a similar notion of white middle-class masculinity made it less acceptable to express anger in a workplace that was becoming increasingly bureaucratic following World War Two.[67] My research contributes to this body of research by considering ways in which the meatpacking industry's system of national pattern bargaining was in itself a highly gendered construct, and by exploring the constructions of masculinity that operated within it.

With four substantial packinghouses and the largest concentration of unionized packing workers in Alberta in the postwar era, Edmonton is a valuable setting for exploring the response of packinghouse workers to the era of national pattern bargaining. Yet to date little has been written about packing workers in the province. The focus of Western

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[64] Peter S. McInnis, *Harnessing Labour Confrontation : Shaping the Postwar Settlement in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002). 5

[65] Wells, "Origins of Canada's Wagner Model." Sam Gindin, *The Canadian Auto Workers : The Birth and Transformation of a Union* (Toronto: James Lorimer & Co., 1995); Sturla Gunnarsson and National Film Board of Canada., "Final Offer," ([Montreal]: NFB,, 1985).

[66] Parr, *Gender of Breadwinners*; Creese, *Contracting Masculinity*. Guard, "Womanly Innocence."

[67] Stephen H. Norwood, *Strikebreaking and Intimidation: Mercenaries and Masculinity in Twentieth-Century America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002). 228

Canadian, and particularly Alberta's labour history, has been the mining industry and debate about "Western exceptionalism" during a period of labour radicalism that peaked after World War One.[68] Very little has been written about the post-World War Two period, which established the legal and ideological framework for labour relations in Alberta that exists today.[69] In his official history of Alberta Federation of Labour, Warren Caragata sketches the development of industrial unionism in Alberta's meatpacking industry during and immediately after World War Two.[70] A new edited collection on working-class life and the labour movement in Alberta focuses most closely on the post-1979 era in the meatpacking industry, particularly the 1986 Gainer strike.[71] Alvin Finkel's study of Alberta's Social Credit government briefly situates the 1947 national meatpacking strike within the political economy of the province.[72] In focusing on Alberta's largest community of packing workers, my research provides new insight into the impact they had as members of a progressive industrial union when they replaced coal miners as a major pillar of Alberta's labour

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[68] David Bercuson, "Labour Radicalism and the Western Industrial Frontier: 1897-1919," *Canadian Historical Review* 58, no. 2 (1977). Craig Heron, ed. *The Workers' Revolt in Canada, 1917-1925* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press,1998). Allen Seager, "Socialists and Workers: The Western Canadian Coal Miners, 1900-21," *Labour/Le Travail* 16, no. Fall (1985). One exception is the study of women who worked at the GWG plant in Edmonton. Cole, "Garment Manufacturing in Edmonton." David Bright's study of striking Calgary packing workers in 1919, which emphasizes the sustained militancy among some workers despite government repression, faults the labour movement for the strike's failure without engaging directly with this debate. David Bright, "Meatpackers' Strike at Calgary 1920," *Alberta History* 44, no. 2 (1996).

[69] Warren Caragata, *Alberta Labour, a Heritage Untold* (Toronto,: J. Lorimer, 1979). Alvin Finkel, "The Cold War, Alberta Labour, and the Social Credit Regime," *Labour/Le Travail* 21, no. Spring (1988). Judy Fudge and Eric Tucker, *Labour before the Law: The Regulation of Workers' Collective Action in Canada, 1900-1948* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004).

[70] Caragata, *Alberta Labour*. 127-132

[71] Alvin Finkel, ed. *Working People in Alberta: A History* (Edmonton: Athabasca University Press,2012). See also, Alain Noel and Keith Gardner, "The Gainers Strike: Capitalist Offensive, Militancy, and the Politics of Industrial Relations in Canada," *Studies in Political Economy* 31(1990); David C. May, *The Battle of 66 Street: Pocklington Vs UFCW Local 280P* (Edmonton: Duval House Publishing, 1996).

[72] Alvin Finkel, *The Social Credit Phenomenon in Alberta* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989). 109-110

movement during the decades after World War Two as the coal industry went into decline. It also contributes to our understanding of Alberta's regional distinctiveness by examining the exceptional militancy of Alberta packing workers during two national meatpacking labour disputes in the 1970s.

This research also speaks to a debate about rising worker militancy in Canada from the mid-1960s through the 1970s, which triggered many wildcat strikes -- strikes not sanctioned by the union leadership. Labour historians have attributed the militancy to a range of factors from "high expectations" and inflation to the impact of technology and the youthful baby boomers.[73] Although there has been some acknowledgement that the vast majority of rebellious workers were male, there has been limited attention to the role played by notions of working-class masculinity within unions.[74] My work explores the impact on class solidarity and power of competing notions of masculinity within the packing union, particularly in the 1970s when labour was under siege.

In spotlighting the class activism of an important group of unionized workers in postwar Alberta, this study contributes to a broader scholarly debate about the degree to which class conflict has shaped Alberta society. The argument by John Richards and Larry Pratt that Alberta society has been much less homogenous than C.B. Macpherson claimed in the 1950s is reinforced by the story of Edmonton's packinghouse workers.[75] It also

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[73] Heron, *The Canadian Labour Movement*. Bryan D. Palmer, *Canada's 1960s : The Ironies of Identity in a Rebellious Era* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009). Ian Milligan, "Rebel Youth: Young Workers, New Leftists, and Labour in English Canada, 1964-1973" (Ph.D., York University, 2011).

[74] Peter S. McInnis, "Hothead Troubles: 1960s-Era Wildcat Strikes in Canada," in *Debating Dissent: Canada and the 1960s*, ed. Lara Campbell, Dominique Clément, and Gregory Kealey (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012).

[75] John Richards and Larry Pratt, *Prairie Capitalism: Power and Influence in the New West* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1979). 149-153; C. B. Macpherson, *Democracy in Alberta: Social Credit and the Party System*, 2d ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1962).

substantiates the argument by Roger Gibbins, who traces the dramatic social and economic transformation of the Prairie provinces since World War Two, that whatever degree of regional homogeneity existed earlier in the province's history has steadily been eroded since 1931. The region has become more like Central and Eastern Canada in terms of class differences.[76] Finally, by exploring the complex identities of Edmonton packing workers this research expands our understanding of their class consciousness, solidarity, and militancy in the postwar decades when scholars have seen Alberta's working classes as largely quiescent.[77]

More generally, in spotlighting an important working-class community, this research expands our understanding of Edmonton during an era when it underwent dramatic growth and transformation. It offers insight into how the work lives and household economies of unionized manufacturing workers in this community changed over time with the rise and decline of industrial unionism. Finally, close attention to the electoral impact of packinghouse workers helps reveal the political culture of the city, particularly in the 1940s through the 1960s, detailing the extent to which Edmonton's working classes were able to project an alternative, more leftist vision of Alberta society on the province's political landscape.

Sources and Methodology

This study is built on a wide range of primary sources that reveal the perspectives of unions, management, a diversity of media, governments, and, most importantly, rank and file workers. The sources include the archived records of UPWA and its successor unions,

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[76] Roger Gibbins, "Regionalism in Decline: 1940 to the Present," in *Riel to Reform: A History of Protest in Western Canada*, ed. George Melnyk (Saskatoon: Fifth House Publishers, 1992).
[77] Finkel, "The Cold War."

Canadian Food and Allied Workers (CFAW) and United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW). These records reveal how each union interacted with its Edmonton membership and offer insight into relations between local, national, and international leaders, as well as the particular grievances of local workers. Staff reports on Edmonton locals were well preserved and accessible for the period before 1965, but had not yet been archived for the late 1960s and the 1970s when the research was conducted. General membership meeting minutes and some executive meeting minutes were available only for the two largest of Edmonton's four packing locals, Canada Packers and Swift Canadian, and only for the period from 1965 to 1979. This meant that one of the dominant voices in the documentary evidence commenting on Edmonton locals in the pre-1965 era was the voice of Alberta staff representative Jack Hampson, who held this position from 1945 until the mid 1960s, while union minutes provided a more grassroots perspective on the locals in the post-1965 era. Unfortunately, no minutes for any of the four locals prior to 1965 and for Burns and Gainer locals in the later period have been found. I did find a very limited number of company records related to Edmonton packinghouses serendipitously in union archives, and supplemented them with company annual reports and two company-sponsored histories of Canada Packers to explore the perspective of local and national management. Federal government reports on the packing industry helped build a larger context within which to situate Edmonton packing locals by revealing the attitudes of corporate executives, national union leaders, and the state at particular historical junctures, particularly Labour Canada's collection of records on labour disputes. The *Edmonton Journal* and *The People's Weekly* were important sources for local media response to local labour disputes. Transcripts for twenty interviews conducted by several other individuals and organizations provided

considerable insight into the views of key local union leaders, activists, and national packing industry figures.[78]

A central primary source for this study is a collection of fifty-one interviews that I conducted between 2004 and 2008. Interviews are a unique historical source because they are created by the researcher in collaboration with the person relating his or her memories. These narratives did not give me unmediated access to workers' experience, yet rigorous and thoughtful contextualization of oral history accounts and corroboration using textual sources has offered considerable explanatory power for understanding the lives, perspectives, and agency of those interviewed. As a former newspaper journalist turned historian I was drawn to the idea of conducting interviews to give voice to groups marginalized in traditional histories that privilege the written word in the hope of gaining insight into their subjectivities. Poststructuralists have mounted a strong critique of the notion of "experience" and "subjectivities," arguing that the cultural discourses that surround us shape our thoughts and behaviour so completely that it is impossible for historians to access a stable sense of identity.[79] As Judith Butler has explained in relation to gender identities (but it applies equally to all identities), we each perform a variety of personas in particular contexts through aspects like the way we dress or gestures we make.[80] Although these intellectual currents have changed the way interviews are viewed, I agree with Joan Sangster and others who argue that the concept of experience related through the interview, is still useful "as a layered

[78] These transcripts are for interviews with fourteen former Edmonton packinghouse workers conducted by Alberta Labour History Institute over the past ten years. See http://www.labourhistory.ca I also accessed interviews with four former packinghouse leaders conducted by Alberta Federation of Labour historian Warren Caragata in the mid 1970s, and interviews with two management figures conducted by geographer Ian MacLachlan in the 1990s.

[79] Joan Wallach Scott, "The Evidence of Experience," *Critical Inquiry* 17, no. Summer (1991).

[80] Judith P. Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1993).

process that is both lived and construed; as both a point of origin and as discursively constructed."[81] With attention to all dimensions of the interview as a primary source, oral accounts can be a valuable tool for exploring specific cultures in ways that make explicit human exploitation, oppression, and injustice.

Oral accounts are complex historical sources whose reliability hinges in part on the way interviewees were recruited, the format of the interview, and the representativeness of the interview sample.[82] Interviews are also shaped by the relationship between the interviewer and the person narrating their memories. The interviewer is not neutral or objective and brings a particular subjectivity to the interview, which influences the narrative produced. My position as a white, middle-aged, middle-class female Anglo-Canadian academic born and raised in Toronto clearly made me an outsider to Edmonton's meatpacking industry as an interviewer. This subjectivity made some elderly male workers hesitant to share details about the grittier side of packinghouse culture, such as "packinghouse language." It also meant that, although I had lived in Alberta for more than ten years in the 1980s and 90s, I had never lived in Edmonton and could not have the same understanding of local responses to the packing industry as someone born and raised in the city. On the other hand, being female seemed to make it easier for both male and female workers to share details about their household economy and family relationships. My position as an outsider, particularly an academic, also gave me credibility as a somewhat detached observer, allowing me to include participants who had a negative attitude toward

[81] Joan Sangster, *Transforming Labour: Women and Work in Post-War Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010). 14.
[82] For more detail on how I conducted the interviews see Appendix B.

the union, or who were from management.[83] I suspect that being an outsider also meant there has been less pressure on me to "get the story right" than if I came from within Edmonton's meatpacking community.

Oral history theorists have emphasized the need to recognize the role of memory as an active process of creating meanings. Lynn Abrams has noted the importance of situating memories because, "one person's memory operates within a wider context that includes memory produced and maintained by family, community and public representations."[84] In conducting my research in Edmonton I came to realize that many workers' memories were coloured by their relationship to the violent 1986 Gainer strike involving owner Peter Pocklington, and the abrupt shutdown of the city's last major packinghouse during a 1998 strike under unfavourable terms negotiated by the union. Those workers whose employment at Edmonton packinghouses ended before the 1986 strike, although highly aware of this pivotal event, tended to have more positive memories of their experience in the local packing industry. In comparison, those who worked in the plant during the 1986 strike and particularly the 1998 plant closure most often expressed bitterness toward both management and their union leadership, which made this lens through which memories were viewed an important factor in my interpretations.

Joan Sangster has highlighted the ways in which memories are influenced by gender and class, citing examples where women were more inclined to locate themselves on the margins of public events and to downplay their own activities, and management figures and

[83] When conducting interviews a few participants asked me where I stood in relation to unions. One management figure asked bluntly whether I was "management side or union side" and after I explained that I was interested in the culture of plant workers responded "well this interview stops here," before adding that he was only joking, and going on to give written consent for his participation.
[84] Lynn Abrams, *Oral History Theory* (London: Routledge, 2010). 79

workers recalled an era of layoffs in very different ways.[85] In my research the tendency to downplay their own activities was noticeable with some women workers, but not all. One of the most notable differences between those who had held management positions and those who had been workers, was the much higher preference for anonymity among former management figures, and the requirement that consent hinge on review of parts of the text that referenced their interview. This may be attributed in part to higher levels of education among management figures, but also the bias expected of a labour historian.

Influenced by the new theoretical currents in the practice of oral history I strove to avoid the questionnaire-style interview and to instead create space for multiple narratives to emerge and to focus as much on how individuals narrated as on what they said, to gain insight into the cultures and identities that shaped the packing industry, its labour relations, and political impact. This goal was complicated, however, by my own background as a former journalist, which made it particularly difficult to avoid leading questions -- something I was able to do only some of the time.

Chapter Summaries

Chapter Two details development of the meatpacking industry in Edmonton. Focusing on the perspective of management it explores the ways in which gender intersected with class and ethnicity to shape the values, goals and strategies of management, highlighting differences at the local, and national levels of Canada's largest packing companies. This approach yields new insights into internal management relations within the context of this heavily unionized industry during the era of centralized bargaining.

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[85] Joan Sangster, "Telling Our Stories: Feminist Debates and the Use of Oral History," in *The Oral History Reader*, ed. Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson (Routledge, 1998). 88-89

Chapter Three traces the emergence and evolution of North Edmonton as a packinghouse district in the twentieth century, sketching the survival strategies of working-class households from the difficult interwar years through the 1970s, tracing continuity and change. It also explores community politics in the packing district, elaborating the complex factors that prevented Northeast Edmonton from achieving greater electoral traction, despite its distinctive leftist voting patterns.

Chapter Four details the political economy of the union, historicizing the struggle to establish the union and its system of national pattern bargaining against the backdrop of the Cold War. It also sketches the larger national and international context of the union, union mergers in the 1960s and 70s, and their impact on Edmonton's meatpacking locals. The chapter covers union bargaining priorities, union politics, and major labour disputes.

Chapter Five focuses on notions of packing masculinity that dominated Edmonton packinghouses during the era of national pattern bargaining when workers were able to command strong wage gains. It details ways in which male workers constructed themselves to strengthen their wage claims, which included subordinating women and distancing themselves from those seen as non-white who could pose a threat to their economic claims.

Chapter Six focuses on the cultures and identities of packing women and the notions of packing femininity that operated within Edmonton packinghouses. It traces the activism of women workers who used the grievance system and in one case turned to the state to strengthen their claims to equal treatment in the packinghouse. The chapter also investigates the effort of women workers to coordinate gender activism across the city's four packinghouses in the 1950s.

Chapter Seven explores the internal dynamics of Edmonton's packing locals to explain how class, gender and race intersected to shape the strategies used in union struggles. In particular, it details ways in which union leaders mobilized both rough and respectable notions of trade union masculinity to make sense of Ethel Wilson's paradoxical career trajectory. The chapter concludes with a discussion of how gender helped shape the political impact of Edmonton packing workers in their city and on the provincial stage.

This story, which began with the dramatic events in Edmonton surrounding the 1947 national meatpacking strike, traces an era of sustained worker power for more than thirty years, but is ultimately a tale of decline. By bringing a gendered lens to the cultures of the packinghouse, the union, and community politics, it offers new insight into why that economic leverage did not translate into greater working-class political power in Edmonton or Alberta.

Chapter Two: "I am still the Supt. in this plant" -- Management and the Manly Modern Ideal

Built in Edmonton during the depths of the Great Depression, Canada Packers' sleek new packinghouse epitomized the Janus-faced nature of modern industrial meatpacking when it was completed in 1936. **[Figure 2]** Fronted by large office windows that stretched around the corner of two ground floor walls, the architecture asserted male management's authority and control with a sweeping 180-degree view. **[Figure 3]** The interior was also designed to reinforce management's dominance. Inside the bright office salesmen and managers in well-tailored suits worked in an elegant atmosphere of calm and order that contrasted starkly with the horror, gore, and apparent disorder of industrialized slaughter taking place in the bowels of the building. **[Figure 4]** There, male workers splattered by blood, guts, and excrement sweated over lifeless forms in the heat, humidity, and brutality of the killing floor. **[Figure 5]**

By the 1930s each of Canada's Big Three meatpacking companies, which had come to dominate the industry nationally, had built a modern packinghouse in the city to capitalize on the region's recent economic development or to gain access to Canadian markets. Although Canada Packers was the last to establish a presence in the city, the fact that the company was bigger than the next two largest meatpacking companies put together -- Swift Canadian and Burns and Co. -- made Edmonton a major centre for the largest manufacturing industry on the Prairies throughout most of the twentieth century. Despite the remarkable degree of economic power each company wielded within Canada's meatpacking oligopoly, management's reliance on a large and often militant labour force presented ongoing

challenges to the confident sense of control so evident in the design of Canada Packers' modern 1936 packinghouse. This control was soon disrupted by critical labour shortages during World War Two and a complex postwar union environment characterized by centralized bargaining, which posed new challenges to management power.

This chapter examines the establishment and evolution of a modern meatpacking industry in Edmonton. It focuses on the era when a national system of pattern bargaining was in place, from 1947 until 1979 when Burns was the first company to shut down its local packinghouse. It explores management attitudes and strategies, including the influence of contemporary notions of masculinity. The chapter is divided into four sections that detail the structure of the industry, the labour process, labour recruitment, and the culture of modern management.

1. Structure of the Industry

Meatpacking was one of the first modern industries to emerge in the Prairie West during the late nineteenth century as the Canadian government actively encouraged development of a ranching industry to ensure a meat supply for its Mounted Police and Treaty Indians in the region.[1] Edmonton's location in a fertile agricultural area made it suitable for raising a diversity of livestock, particularly hogs. A settlement boom, which began to generate livestock production and a significant urban market by 1900, soon made meatpacking the most important manufacturing industry in the province.[2]

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[1] Howard Palmer and Tamara Jeppson Palmer, *Alberta: A New History* (Edmonton: Hurtig, 1990). 53.
[2] Sproule, "The Role of Patrick Burns in the Development of Western Canada". Alberta's population grew more than five-fold to 374, 000 between 1901 and 1911, compared to a one-third increase in the country as a whole. Palmer and Palmer, *Alberta.*

Edmonton's meatpacking industry helped herald the city's entry into the modern age when, in quick succession, three industrial-scale packinghouses were constructed following the arrival of two railway lines in the early twentieth century.[3] As the city began to grow at a dramatic rate, local butcher John Gainer built the first slaughterhouse in 1904 on the south side of the South Saskatchewan River where the Canadian Pacific Railway had built the only rail line into the area at the time.[4] The modest two-storey building represented a major expansion from his first slaughterhouse at the back of a retail butcher shop. By the 1930s he was slaughtering cattle, hogs, and sheep.[5] The highly anticipated 1908 construction of a second, larger packinghouse, nearly ten kilometers north-east of downtown, which employed 300 workers, generated an industrial base that many hoped would make Edmonton "the Chicago of Canada."[6] The new seven-storey pork packing plant on 66th Street was built by Winnipeg-based J.Y. Griffin and Company on the Canadian National Railway line, which reached Edmonton on the north side of the South Saskatchewan River in 1905. In 1908 the pork plant was snapped up by American-owned Swift Canadian Company in its effort to access the British market.[7]

Edmonton's place at the centre of Alberta's meatpacking industry was secured in 1912 when Alberta industrialist Pat Burns completed construction of Edmonton's third

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[3] ———, *Alberta*. 75.
[4] Edmonton's population grew nearly tenfold between 1901 and 1911, from 2,626 to 24,900. Klassen, *A Business History of Alberta*; Canada, *The Canada Year Book*, ed. Census and Statistics Office (1911). 90; James Grierson MacGregor, *Edmonton: A History*, 2nd ed. (Edmonton: Hurtig, 1975). 147.
[5] J.A. Young, "Strike Reports, Edmonton Alberta, Meatpacking Plant Employees, Gainers Ltd," ed. Canada Department of Labour (Library and Archives Canada, RG27 Vol 385, Reel T-2993, File 69, 1937).
[6] , *Edmonton Bulletin*, 8 June.
[7] MacLachlan, *Kill and Chill*. 152-53.

packinghouse on 120th Avenue, only a few blocks away from the Swift plant.[8] That seven-storey packinghouse employed about 200 workers. The Canada Packers plant built in 1936 across the street from Swift was a late but important arrival in Edmonton at roughly two thirds the size of the Swift plant and employing more than two hundred workers.[9] Seeing great promise in the region's rich mixed farmland, the company felt Edmonton could "one day [be] the most important hog centre in Canada."[10] The congregation of three major packinghouses on the outskirts of the city made North Edmonton a major industrial centre. **[Figure 6]**

When they were built, Edmonton packinghouses were typical of the early modern era in their location, main mode of transportation, organization, and level of mechanization. In the 1870s Americans Gustavus Swift and P.D. Armour were the first to fully modernize meatpacking by developing faster, more cost-effective ways of slaughtering livestock and processing meat. The invention of the moving chain, or "disassembly line," dramatically increased the profitability of meat slaughter, and also provided the economies of scale necessary to sell non-meat byproducts, making meatpacking the epitome of a highly rationalized and technologically driven enterprise.[11] But the industry operated with a razor-thin profit margin of less than one per cent. Packing companies had to process massive volumes of a highly perishable product quickly and sell every part of the animal to make a

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[8] In comparison, Calgary's semi-arid climate and vast rangeland made it the centre of Canada's ranching industry.

[9] Canada Packer's new packinghouse won an architectural award for its modern design. Eric R. Arthur, "Canada Packers Plant at Edmonton," *Royal Architectural Institute of Canada* August(1937). Canada Packers Ltd., *The Story of Our Products* (Kingston, Ont.: Jackson Press, 1943). 38.

[10] ———, *The Story of Our Products*. 33-35.

[11] The assembly line in a packinghouse is more accurately called a "dis-assembly" line because the product is disassembled or broken down into smaller parts, not assembled into a large finished product. Henry Ford was inspired to adapt the Chicago packers' moving chain to the automobile industry where he revolutionized production with the assembly line. Horowitz, *Negro and White*. 17.

profit. This imperative placed tremendous pressure on management to continually find new ways to reorganize and better control the labour process, particularly the pace of work using the moving chain. Another major American innovation was the development of refrigerated railway cars, called "reefers," which allowed packing companies to slaughter, process, and transport meat in all seasons.[12]

All of Edmonton's packinghouses slaughtered both cattle and hogs, and some slaughtered other animals, like sheep or poultry, in an effort to process a continuous stream of livestock from nearby farms to keep refrigerated railway cars moving at full capacity. This also allowed packing companies to capitalize on economies of scale and produce a wide range of byproducts as well as meat products. Although the plants had some mechanization, with a moving overhead chain on the hog killing floor, and conveyor belts, manual labourers still performed much of the work until the 1960s in most plants.[13]

The main differences among the four Edmonton packinghouses were differences of scale. The Swift and Canada Packers plants were large enough to slaughter hogs and cattle simultaneously all day with separate pork and beef killing departments on two sides of one large room in each plant.[14] But the smaller Burns plant killed only cattle in the morning and

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[12] *Ibid.* 17. Swift's development of the refrigerated railway car (called a "reefer") was an important development for year-round transportation. John H. White, *The American Railroad Freight Car: From the Wood-Car Era to the Coming of Steel* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993).

[13] MacLachlan, *Kill and Chill.* 134.

[14] Canada Packers slaughtered an average of 1,000 cattle and 3,000 hogs each week when it first opened in 1937. By 1965, according to a 1965 municipal government report, Canada Packers slaughtered 3,000 cattle per week, 8,000 hogs, and 1,500 sheep and veal. Swift slaughtered slightly more livestock than Canada Packers and Burns slaughtered much less - roughly one-tenth the amount. Gainer was smaller again, slaughtering half the number of cattle Burns slaughtered, on average, although the Gainer plant slaughtered more hogs. Arthur, "Canada Packers Plant at Edmonton; K.S. Pennifold, *Odour Generation in Packing Plants*, ed. City of Edmonton Local Board of Health (EMA, 1965).

hogs in the afternoon throughout much of the period.[15] As a smaller packinghouse Burns also had a more limited processing division in Edmonton that did not include a canning department, which, at the larger Swift and Canada Packers plants, employed many women during the immediate postwar years.[16]

1.1 Canada's Meat Trust

By 1937 when Canada Packers had built its local packinghouse, the owners of Edmonton's three largest meatpacking plants had become a powerful national oligopoly, despite the much-vaunted notions of competitive individualism and political freedoms cherished by Canadian liberal elites as pillars of the modern era. The meatpacking industry was largely under Canadian control -- both Canada Packers and Burns were Canadian-owned -- but it was concentrated in fewer hands than in the United States. Canada's meatpacking trust emerged roughly twenty years later than in the American industry because Canada industrialized later, a developmental time lag that persisted in the Canadian industry until the 1980s. Nevertheless, Canada's meatpacking industry followed a similar pattern of development.

The entrepreneurs behind these companies achieved efficiencies using American technologies and modern Canadian transportation systems, reinvesting profits to expand. In addition to adopting the disassembly line to cut labour costs, they built facilities to process the large volume of byproducts they accumulated, like blood, fats, and offal, to make products like fertilizer, lard, and glue. [17] A large new network of government-financed

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[15] Ellen B., Interview (Edmonton: 2006).
[16] Hampson, "Alberta Staff Reports, Locals 233-422." Local 233, 24 March 1948
[17] James Rennie, "The Growth and Development of Canada's Meat Packing Industry," *Food in Canada* (1969). 19.

railways that reached across the country in all directions by the early twentieth century made it possible to ship livestock from farms in the agricultural hinterland to urban packinghouses that had easy access to large markets in central and eastern Canada or across the ocean. The companies also built facilities located at railway junctions in urban centres that could accommodate a large and constant supply of livestock, and constructed a network of refrigerated branch plants in smaller centres where retail buyers came to purchase animal carcasses in person. By the 1920s Canada Packers, Burns and Company and American-owned Swift Canadian had achieved enough capital investment through economies of scale to develop vertically integrated operations in Canada that encompassed every stage of the process from the purchase of raw materials to the manufacture of a wide range of meats and byproducts and their distribution through a series of branch plants.[18]

Canada's limited and geographically scattered domestic market made the packing industry highly dependent on government policies. Ontario, particularly Toronto, became a major centre for hog production in 1890 when the American McKinley tariff virtually eliminated Canadian exports of barley to the United States. This convinced many Ontario farmers to increase their livestock production by feeding the surplus grain to hogs. For the first time Toronto meatpackers were able to secure a large, constant supply of high quality hogs to turn into Canadian bacon for the expanding British market. A British regulation in 1892 requiring that all imported cattle be slaughtered within twenty-four hours of disembarking was also a boon to Canadian packers who began to export dressed beef to

[18] Barrett, *Work and Community in the Jungle*. 14-15.

Britain as well as produce more dressed beef for the domestic market.[19] Canada's preferential access to the British market in the first decades of the twentieth century also encouraged development of the meatpacking industry. Swift bought a series of Canadian plants -- including the largest one in Edmonton -- to gain access to the British bacon market, from which American companies were barred by tariffs.[20] An 1897 federal government agreement with the Canadian Pacific Railway to subsidize grain transportation made it cheaper for Western farmers to ship grain than livestock to eastern Canada. As a result, weaned calves were shipped east to be fattened on Ontario corn, making Ontario a major centre for "finishing," slaughtering, and processing beef until after World War Two.[21]

Trade deals strengthened the position of the Big Three Canadian packing companies in the 1930s. Selling bacon in the British market helped Canadian meatpacking companies thrive despite the Depression. In 1932 the Canadian government signed the "Ottawa Agreement" with Britain, which gave Canada a substantial bacon quota in the British market. Canada Packers built its large modern Edmonton packing plant in 1936 to take advantage of this new market.[22] Corporate concentration helps explain the limited price fluctuation for meat products during the Depression, which allowed Canadian packing companies to fare much better than most manufacturing companies. In the 1930s the Royal Commission on Price Spreads found that Canada Packers had fifty-nine per cent of total industry revenues and Swift Canadian had twenty-six per cent, which meant that together they represented

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[19] George Sayers Bain, "The United Packinghouse, Food and Allied Workers: Its Development, Structure, Collective Bargaining, and Future, with Particular Reference to Canada" (M.A., The University of Manitoba, 1964); Bliss, *A Canadian Millionaire*. 40.
[20] MacLachlan, *Kill and Chill*. 152-3.
[21] *Ibid.* 75-76.
[22] Canada Packers Ltd., *The Story of Our Products*. 33-35.

eighty-five per cent of the total industry in Canada, yet the government took no significant action.[23]

Canada's Big Three packing companies also profited from government contracts during World War Two. By 1945 Canada Packers and Swift operated plants in major cities from one end of the country to the other, and Burns had established plants throughout the Canadian West.[24] Canada's Big Three packing companies were quite profitable. According to union research, between 1947 and 1948 profits at Burns and Co. increased 17.7 per cent, and a government report found that in 1948 Canada Packers achieved an annual profit of more than 23 per cent.[25]

World War Two, however, introduced a new reality to Canada's packing management; the presence of a strong industrial union. During the war Edmonton managers faced frequent work stoppages and slowdowns, including a wildcat sympathy strike at Canada Packers in 1945 and, two years later, a nation-wide strike that shut down three local packinghouses and crippled the Swift plant, which tried to continue operating. A major turning point was in 1944 when the federal government, which controlled labour legislation nationally because of the War Measures Act, passed PC1003, labour legislation that granted

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[23] Henry Herbert Stevens and William Walker Kennedy, *Report of the Royal Commission on Price Spreads*, (Ottawa: J. O. Patenaude, Printer to the King, 1935). 56-58.

[24] In 1947 Canada Packers had a packinghouse in Toronto, Peterborough, Hull, Montreal, St. Boniface, Edmonton, Vancouver and Charlottetown. "Canada Packers and UPWA Collective Agreement," (UFCW Rexdale office, Toronto, Bill Reno Research Boxes). Swift Canadian had one in Edmonton, Moose Jaw, New Westminster B.C., Toronto, St. Boniface, and Moncton. "Swift Canadian and UPWA Collective Agreement," (UFCW Rexdale office, Toronto, Bill Reno Research Boxes). Burns packinghouses were located in Calgary, Edmonton, Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, Regina, Vancouver, and Winnipeg. Labour Canada, Strikes and Lockouts Files (Canada Packers, Swift, Burns, Gainers, Edmonton), (LAC, 1947).

[25] John Lenglet, "Research Report for UPWA Canadian Conference," (Estes Park, Colorado: LAC, CFAW fonds, MG 28 I-186, PWOC and UPWA series, Vol 5, 1949). 5-6.

workers the right to join a union, bargain collectively, and strike.[26] The government intervened because of the risk constant labour disruptions posed to the country's war effort -- in this case to contracts supplying meat to soldiers overseas and later as part of Canada's relief efforts in Europe. It was in response to these pressures that the top management executives of Canada's Big Three meatpacking companies and Gainer's in Edmonton were forced to recognize the American-based industrial union United Packinghouse Workers of America (UPWA) and came to embrace a centralized system of bargaining initially imposed by government.[27]

The system of national pattern bargaining, which ensured that each company had a separate master contract but agreed to the same annual wage increase, operated by consensus, not any rule of law, and made the meatpacking industry unusual within the North American context.[28] Anne Forrest has noted that notwithstanding its oligopolistic structure, compared to other manufacturing industries there were still "relatively few barriers" to entering the meatpacking industry, which was labour intensive and not as heavily reliant on technology in the immediate postwar years as some industries, like steel or auto.[29] Mid-size operations could achieve substantial economies of scale, and there was limited product differentiation by brand for fresh meats, which prevented a company from setting prices independently. These realities made wages a major source of competition in the postwar era. The economies of scale that Canada Packers could achieve as by far the largest meatpacking company in the

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[26] PC1003 expressly prohibited strikes during the life of a contract or during conciliation. The restriction during conciliation was unique to Canada. Heron, *The Canadian Labour Movement*. 72.
[27] Montague, "Trade Unionism".
[28] Multi-employer bargaining was the norm in Europe and Scandinavia but represented only eight per cent of collective agreements in Canada during the era of centralized bargaining in the Canadian meatpacking industry. Forrest, "The Rise and Fall of National Bargaining." 393.
[29] *Ibid.* 401.

country, together with its leadership role in the expansive postwar market, allowed the company to set a high wage standard in the industry. As Ian MacLachlan has explained, there was no real international competition because the Big Four American meat packers were dealing with the same union and had a similar system of industry-wide bargaining.[30]

Within this new postwar context officials from the Big Three Canadian packing companies usually met with union representatives in Toronto "at the same hotel but at separate tables" to negotiate monetary issues like wages, overtime rates, and holidays when the contract came up for renewal.[31] The union chose one company to negotiate the "key" contract -- almost always Canada Packers because it was so much larger than the others -- which then set the standard for most other companies in the Canadian industry. But there was also flexibility for each company to negotiate different non-wage contract terms. In some areas, such as pensions, the companies could be quite different – Burns was the least generous with its pension plan, while Swift was the most generous. The language of each company's contract was also distinctive – Canada Packers had the most restrictive language when it came to applying seniority and transferring workers between departments.[32]

The system of national pattern bargaining resulted in substantial wage increases. The average wage in the Canadian meatpacking industry rose 716 per cent between 1948 and 1979, compared to a 236 per cent increase in the Canadian Consumer Price Index during the

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[30] MacLachlan, *Kill and Chill*. 272-73.

[31] Forrest, "The Rise and Fall of National Bargaining." 394. According to former Burns Vice President William Goetz, Burns only met for negotiations in Toronto half the time and negotiated in a variety of hotels. Canada Packers and Swift always met in Toronto. Canada Packers and Swift usually held their negotiations at the Royal York Hotel. Goetz emphasized that non-monetary items like pensions could sometimes rival wages for importance during negotiations. William Goetz, Telephone Interview (2008).

[32] ———, Interview Transcript (Calgary: Ian MacLachlan, 1995).

same period.[33] **[Table 1]** Throughout this period the Canadian packing labour force continued to expand, increasing more than fifty per cent nationally, which exacerbated the rise in labour costs.[34] As we will see, Canada's meatpacking companies turned increasingly to modern technologies and engineering expertise to reduce their labour costs. One other advantage to the use of new technologies was that costly renovations and expansions, or the strategic acquisition of independent plants, tended to strengthen the position of Canada's Meat Trust by eliminating many smaller firms.[35]

The industry expanded most dramatically in Alberta. Edmonton's meatpacking industry received a major economic impetus in 1947 following the discovery of a massive oil reserve at the town of Leduc, just south of the city, which transformed Alberta's economy and made Edmonton one of the fastest growing cities in North America.[36] Meatpacking remained Alberta's most important manufacturing industry until 1976 when it was outpaced by petroleum refining.[37] With four major packinghouses Edmonton was the centre of Alberta's expansive meatpacking industry throughout this era.[38] Both the city and province gained importance as the industry began to restructure in the 1960s and 70s, shifting from a reliance on railway lines to trucks and new technologies, which moved much of the beef

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[33] Department of Labour Canada, *Wage Rates, Salaries, and Hours of Labour, 1947-1983*, ed. Surveys Division Labour Data (1983). Ian MacLachlan has pointed out that between 1960 and 1984 the average meatpacking wage was eight to twelve per cent higher than the average wage for all manufacturing industries in Canada. MacLachlan, *Kill and Chill*. 273.

[34] Statistics Canada, "The Slaughtering and Meat Packing Industry and the Sausage and Casings Industry 1949-79," ed. Department of Trade and Commerce, cat. 32-221.

[35] MacLachlan, *Kill and Chill*. 237.

[36] Palmer and Palmer, *Alberta*. 300.

[37] Canada. Dominion Bureau of Statistics. and Statistics Canada, *Manufacturing Industries of Canada. Prairie Provinces = Industries Manufacturières Du Canada. Provinces Des Prairies*, Manufacturing and Primary Industries Division (Ottawa,: Statistics Canada, c.1930-71); Statistics Canada, *Manufacturing Industries of Canada National and Provincial Areas*, 1972-1980, cat. 31-203.

[38] In comparison Calgary's meatpacking industry was roughly sixty per cent of the size of Edmonton's throughout the postwar decades to 1980.

slaughtering from urban centres, most often in central Canada, to rural Alberta. Alberta became the third largest meatpacking province in the country. Ontario and Quebec, which have always been the heartland of manufacturing in Canada because of their large markets and political influence, remained the biggest meatpacking provinces, but between 1948 and 1979 Alberta's share of total Canadian meatpacking production more than doubled from fourteen per cent to twenty-nine per cent.[39] The proportion of Canadian cattle slaughtered in Alberta jumped even more significantly from fourteen per cent in 1947 to thirty-eight per cent in 1979 as the industry restructured to take advantage of new beef kill technologies.

Public fears about the growing concentration of Canada's food industry during this expansive era helped trigger a government investigation into Canada Packers' 1955 acquisition of two small meatpacking plants, one in Calgary and the other in Montreal. The federal Restrictive Trade Practices Commission (RTPC) found that the acquisitions were "likely to lessen competition" in the industry and recommended that the merger be dissolved, but no action was actually taken against the company.[40] In 1960 Canada Packers built the

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[39] During the same period the proportion of hogs slaughtered in the province declined from eighteen to fifteen percent as the centre of hog slaughter and packing shifted to Quebec, which was a major market for pork. Data for 1947 and earlier is not available. Statistics Canada, *The Slaughtering and Meat Packing Industry and the Sausage and Casings Industry,* 1949-79.

[40] Canada. Restrictive Trade Practices Commission, *Report Concerning the Meat Packing Industry and the Acquisition of Wilsil Limited and Calgary Packers Limited by Canada Packers Limited : Combines Investigation Act*, (Ottawa: Dept. of Justice, 1961). 429-30. Government and business elites have often argued that Canada's small economy made a higher-than-average level of industry and market concentration inevitable. W.T. Stanbury, "Corporate Power and Political Influence," in *Mergers, Corporate Concentration and Power in Canada*, ed. R. S. Khemani, et al. (Halifax, N.S.: Institute for Research on Public Policy = Institut de recherches politiques, 1988). In a study comparing changes in corporate concentration in Canada, the United States, Japan, and the Federal Republic of Germany during a slightly later period (1965 to 1983), Christian Marfels found that "overall concentration in Canada increased substantially at the time when it declined in the economies of its leading trading partners." Christian Marfels, "Aggregate Concentration in International Perspective: Canada, Federal Republic of Germany, Japan and the United States," in *Mergers, Corporate Concentration and Power in Canada*, ed. R. S. Khemani, et al. (Halifax, N.S.: Institute for Research on Public Policy = Institut de recherches politiques, 1988). 63.

first of a "new breed" of packing plants in Canada, a move that by the late 1970s had rendered the early modern multi-storied and highly diversified packinghouses in cities like Edmonton obsolete. Built in the small city of Lethbridge, the new one-story plant was dedicated to beef slaughter only and used new technologies that reduced management's reliance on highly skilled workers.[41] The new network of highways built in Canada after World War Two allowed the company to locate its beef-slaughter plant in small-town Alberta where land was cheap and the labour force was less sympathetic to unions. Swift and Burns soon followed suit, building similar plants in small prairie communities.

The drive to undermine labour's power because of union wages had triggered a similar development across the border, with some important differences. The United States had a more competitive business environment, which made it easier for small independent meatpackers to thrive. The upstart Iowa Beef Producers (IBP) was able to secure a $300,000 loan from the U.S. Small Business Administration in 1960 to build specialized beef slaughter plants with new technologies to reduce skill levels and eliminate jobs.[42] The company, which built only specialized beef-slaughter plants and located them all in rural mid-western communities to avoid unions, was quickly able to challenge the power of America's Meat Trust, and soon posed a serious threat to Canada's meatpacking oligopoly. By the 1990s the old American packing companies -- Armour, Swift, Wilson, and Cudahy -- had disappeared and a new Big Three of massive American-based agro-conglomerates had emerged -- IBP, ConAgra, and Cargill. The power and influence of the union in the American meatpacking

[41] MacLachlan, *Kill and Chill.* 283.
[42] *Ibid.* 236.

industry collapsed with the old packing companies. In the 1990s less than half the workers employed by the new Big Three were organized.[43]

In Canada an increasing number of factors further eroded the competitive position of the Big Three packing companies. Upstart American companies were able to reduce their costs by building "boxed beef" additions to their beef slaughter plants in the 1960s using the innovation of Cryovac packaging to vacuum-pack retail packages of meat. Shipping boxed beef rather than swinging sides of beef generated further savings by reducing the weight of shipped product. As a result the cost of transporting beef dropped significantly in 1966 for shipments from Calgary to Montreal.[44] Ian MacLachlan has pointed out that Canadian meatpackers lagged significantly in this development because of the power of Canada's largest food retailers, who preferred to buy beef carcasses rather than boxed beef well into the 1970s to better control the quality of their product. As late as 1976 supermarket chains were still performing eighty-three per cent of beef fabrication from a chilled carcass into a market-ready product.[45] Remarkably, these supermarket chains were also able to appropriate the bulk of savings in transportation costs once they began buying boxed beef.[46]

In the late 1970s Canada's meatpacking companies also began to feel the effects of declining consumer demand. The market for Canadian meat products, which had been expanding throughout most of the thirty-year period following World War Two, contracted dramatically. In the immediate postwar years a high level of meat production was sustained by government contracts to supply economically devastated European countries as part of the

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[43] Horowitz, *Negro and White*. 276.
[44] The cost dropped 47 cents per hundredweight. MacLachlan, *Kill and Chill*. 296.
[45] *Ibid.* 258.
[46] *Ibid.* 297.

United Nations Rehabilitation Relief Association (UNRRA).[47] Canada's per capita meat consumption continued to rise with rising average incomes in the 1950s and 60s until 1976 when it peaked and began to decline in response to a national economic recession, which increased unemployment, low population growth, and changing diets as the rising average age of Canadians heightened health concerns. Beef consumption in Canada peaked at more than fifty kilograms per capita in 1976 then plummeted to thirty-seven kilograms per capita in just three years.[48] **[Table 2]** Meat also became less affordable because of high inflation nationally after the Organization for Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) jacked up oil prices by cutting oil production in 1973. Finally, inflation disproportionately increased the transportation costs of old style meatpacking plants, whose more scattered operations meant that carcasses of beef were often shipped between different plants.[49]

In the 1960s and 70s rising labour tensions resulting in part from new technologies and deskilling, which reduced wages and eliminated jobs, triggered a series of costly strikes and lockouts. A national strike at Canada Packers in 1966 lasted ten weeks, allowing the company's competitors, particularly Burns, to carve away major slices of its market share. The strike is also significant because it brought under the master contract workers in "new breed" beef slaughterhouses, like the one in Lethbridge.

Canada Packers strategized to reduce its vulnerability to labour action in the wake of the 1966 strike. Initially the company took a more cooperative stance and worked closely with Swift and Burns in the early 1970s to isolate and punish the most militant segments of

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[47] Roy Jamha, Interview Transcript (Edmonton: Provincial Archives of Alberta, Warren Caragata fonds, PR1980.0218/8, 1977).
[48] A predominantly downward trend persisted until 1993 when beef consumption in Canada stabilized around thirty-two kilograms per capita. Canada Packers, "Annual Report," (1990).
[49] MacLachlan, *Kill and Chill*. 259.

the union in negotiations. In 1974, by consensus, all three companies locked out their workers in Alberta, because this section of the union had been most resistant to a deal management had negotiated with the union's national executives. Alberta workers had pressed for higher wage gains because of the local economic boom fueled by high oil prices. The lockout was a thinly veiled attempt to destroy national bargaining. The companies offered the union a "five-point plan" that called for contracts to be signed in all plants where employees voted to accept the mediator's deal, which would have deepened regional divisions. The plan found little traction within the union membership. It was farmers in Alberta badly hurt by the labour dispute who forced a settlement by releasing live hogs at the provincial legislature, which put political pressure on the government of Peter Lougheed.[50] The lockout netted workers significant contract gains nationally. When the union struck Swift plants in 1978 Canada Packers decided to lock out workers in its packinghouses throughout the country to strengthen the position of Swift and once again put internal union pressure on militant Alberta workers. The eight-week strike/lock-out netted Canadian packinghouse workers roughly a ten per cent increase in the total value of their master contract, which was higher than the eight per cent wage increase workers were offered initially.[51]

Over time inequalities among the Big Three created growing dissension, which eroded support for the industry's centralized system of bargaining. Burns and Swift Canadian in particular disliked the lack of wage flexibility they had under a bargaining system in which the standard was set by the largest, most profitable, and most powerful

[50]Bob Joyce, Interview (Mississauga: 2008).
[51] Wilfred List, "Canada Packers Gets Agreement; Terms Go to Swift," *Globe and Mail*, 7 August 1978.

company. For example, they resented paying wage rates negotiated by Canada Packers that ignored geographic differences, feeling that a worker in Regina should not be paid the same as a worker in Toronto, where the cost of living was higher.[52]

There was also constant downward pressure on wages from the small number of independent companies that were not part of the national pattern bargaining system and often paid wage rates significantly below the key rate set by the Big Three. For example, Gainer company based in Edmonton undercut Big Three wages by a small margin for many years. More significantly, according to former Burns executive William Goetz, Canada Packers continued to pay a rate below the national union wage to workers in some of the plants it bought up. For example, wages in the mid-sized Hamilton Fearman plant were much less than the wage rate and benefits paid under the master contract for a number of years after Canada Packers bought the packing plant in the early 1980s. Union leaders were unable to explain to Goetz why it took so long to close the wage gap, but the gap undoubtedly reinforced Canada Packers' industry dominance.[53]

In 1984 Burns president A.J.E. Child became the first company executive to refuse to participate in national pattern bargaining because of resentment about Canada Packers' new strategy of negotiating independently of Swift and Burns. Burns won two crucial Ontario labour board rulings in which the company had charged the union with bargaining in bad faith for refusing to bargain on a plant-by-plant basis.[54] More generally, Canada's Big Three packing companies responded to the ongoing crisis in the meatpacking industry in the 1970s

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[52] Goetz, Telephone Interview.
[53] ———, Interview Transcript.
[54] Gardner, "The Gainers Strike."

and 80s by shutting down or selling many of their packinghouses.[55] Urban growth had triggered higher values for the old packing plant properties, and suburban development nearby made the odours and noises they generated a public nuisance for those whose livelihood was not directly linked to the plants.[56]

By the 1970s these forces were making the meat packing divisions of Canada's Big Three packing companies much less profitable than other parts of their operations. As Ian MacLachlan has explained, by the early 1990s Canada's Big Three packing companies had been acquired "in leveraged buyouts as their asset values exceeded their ability to generate profit."[57] Unlike earlier stages in the industry's development when companies were more often owner-operated, by the late twentieth century there was little evidence of emotional commitment to the business. Swift Canadian began selling off its properties in the late 60s and had sold what remained by the late 1970s. After a similar series of closures and divestments Canada Packers was sold in a complex deal to the British conglomerate, Hillsdown Holdings, in 1990. None of Bill McLean's children was interested in taking over the business.[58] Burns Foods withdrew gradually from the slaughter and packing business as overcapacity became chronic in the 1970s and 80s, selling off its remaining assets shortly after A.J.E. Child died in 1996, which marked the end of the Burns company.[59]

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[55] MacLachlan, *Kill and Chill*. 283.
[56] Some workers dismissed the offensiveness of odours from the plant that affected their neighbourhood. Donato Colangelo, Interview Transcript (Edmonton: Alberta Labour History Institute/Ground Zero, 1998). It is telling that the city of Edmonton conducted an investigation into odours emitted by local packing plants in the 1960's as the rate of suburban development increased around the plants. K.S. Pennifold, *Odour Generation in Packing Plants*.
[57] MacLachlan, *Kill and Chill*. 9.
[58] George Athanassakos and Kenneth Harling, "Canada Packers Inc.," *Case Research Journal*, no. Winter (1994). 92.
[59] David Berman, "Hold the Fries," *Canadian Business* 71, no. 1 (1998).

The policies of both the federal and provincial governments also fostered the restructuring of Canada's meatpacking industry. In the 1980s the federal government's elimination of a reduced freight rate for grain transported by rail made it more profitable to feed grain to prairie livestock. Alberta government subsidies for large packing conglomerates helped trigger the construction of several large-scale beef packing plants in the province in the 1980s and 90s. Its pro-business legislative and regulatory environment was a major attraction, in addition to the province's cheap land, cheap labour, and rural populism, which helped ensure a compliant workforce.[60] Low wages, poor benefits, harsh working conditions, and a skyrocketing injury rate created a level of worker turnover that further militated against effective unionization.[61]

Despite warning signals, it came as a shock to the local packing community, including managers, when head offices began shutting down Edmonton's once prodigious meatpacking industry. In 1979 Burns shut down its Edmonton plant, shortly after building a new extension, and Canada Packers stopped killing cattle in Edmonton. Five years later Canada Packers shut down its entire packinghouse, which was quickly demolished. In 1980 Peter Pocklington bought and closed the small south-side Gainer plant to build condominiums on the valuable real estate close to downtown. He then bought what was left of the Swift empire in Canada, including the large Edmonton packinghouse. Overcapacity in the provincial pork market, together with lack of reinvestment, generated losses from which Pocklington was not able to recover, even though the local packinghouse lost money in only

[60] MacLachlan, *Kill and Chill*. 75-77.
[61] Michael Broadway, "Here's the Beef: The Social Costs of Beefpacking's Move to Rural Alberta," *Alberta Views* 4, no. 1 (2001). 28. *Ibid.* Chapter Seven.

two of the nearly 100 years it operated in Edmonton.[62] The provincial government took over the former Swift plant – which Pocklington had renamed Gainer's – in 1989 when he defaulted on government loans, abandoning more than $100 million in debts to Alberta taxpayers.[63] The aging former Swift packinghouse changed hands two more times in the 1990s. Burns bought it from the Alberta government in 1993 because the price was right, then sold it to Maple Leaf in 1996.[64] When Maple Leaf owner Wallace McCain slashed wages in all his unionized meat plants by up to forty per cent in 1997, workers at Edmonton's only remaining packinghouse struck. McCain responded by shutting down the plant for good, ending nearly a century of industrial meatpacking in the city.[65]

2. Modernizing the Labour Process

When Edmonton's first industrial packinghouses opened in the early twentieth century, they were a marvel of modern technology. Efficiency was a top priority in every aspect of design. The Edmonton plants utilized American technologies, particularly the moving chain, or "disassembly line." The process that developed remained essentially the same until the 1950s. The development of an overhead rail system for hauling hog carcasses through the initial stages of the slaughter and disassembly process was refined to ensure a constant flow of production on the hog kill, and give management more control over the pace of work.[66] The continuous overhead chain with a system of conveyers, hoists, and chutes sped up the slaughtering and processing of meat by bringing the product to those labouring

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[62] David Mills, "Peter Pocklington and the Business of Hockey," in *Edmonton: The Life of a City*, ed. Bob Hesketh and Frances Swyripa (Edmonton: NeWest Publishers Limited, 1995).
[63] *Ibid.*
[64] An attempt by local packing workers to buy the plant from the government was rejected by the Alberta government. Author conversation with John Ewasiw, May 2004.
[65] Berman, "Hold the Fries."
[66] MacLachlan, 137.

on a moving line.[67] Management had subdivided the complex butchering process into a large number of discrete tasks, some of which could be performed by cheaper semi-skilled and unskilled workers, rather than highly skilled butchers, which dramatically reduced labour costs. But the large size and delicate nature of the valuable cattle hide and carcass made the beef kill particularly resistant to mechanization until new technologies were developed in the 1950s.

The slaughtering process began when an unskilled yardsman drove unsuspecting livestock up a long ramp to the killing floor where they were herded into a cramped holding pen. The clatter, odious odours and oppressive heat of the killing floor frightened animals, which made the disturbing job of the semi-skilled "stunner" who tried to efficiently knock each one unconscious with a sledgehammer, especially challenging. The stunner had to strike with precision to avoid killing the animal because a beating heart helped drain the blood from the body more quickly. An unskilled worker shackled the limp animal by its hind legs and it was raised upside down mechanically onto a moving chain where the more skilled "sticker" sliced the animal's main artery and vein to kill and bleed the animal before its head was cut off.[68] Unlike hogs, once a cow had been killed, bled, and decapitated, the carcass was lowered mechanically to a siding bed where several skilled workers carefully removed the hide without damaging the meat, then detached the legs and sliced open the belly to remove the internal organs. A team of the most highly paid workers in the plant, the floorsmen, removed the cattle hide manually using knives.[69]

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[67] Halpern, *Down on the Killing Floor*.
[68] Canada Packers Ltd., *The Story of Our Products*. 97-98; Horowitz, *Negro and White*. 18.
[69] ———, *Negro and White*, 68; MacLachlan, *Kill and Chill*. 140.

Situated at the beginning of the beef disassembly process, which was not yet mechanized, the floorsman and other skilled butchers working on the prone carcass had considerable control over the pace at which they laboured. Their skilled use of the knife and the high value of the cattle hide and carcass they handled made it difficult and expensive for management to replace them.[70] Management needed a coterie of skilled butchers to perform other intricate cuts; the work of trimming bellies, taking the rib out of bellies, and trimming hams in the pork-cutting department was performed by highly paid skilled workers. Each plant also employed a handful of highly paid skilled tradesmen such as welders, plumbers, and carpenters who maintained the plant.[71]

Management subdivided much of the work into tasks that required much less skill. Semi-skilled workers performed easier or less potentially damaging cuts, such as boning parts of the carcass, grading products, or operating machinery. In Edmonton, Jed O., a Canada Packers worker who oversaw the transition from cooking lard in large tanks to operating a machine to extract the fat without cooking it, developed a finely tuned ability to reduce the red colour of the lard to a soft shade of yellow in the final product. "That's why I say that is the cleanest products I think we put out in Edmonton here – I don't care what anybody else would say because we made sure."[72] This kind of experience and sense of commitment could make even semi-skilled workers difficult to replace. The unskilled assisted more skilled workers, but also tended livestock in the yards, produced cooked meats, hauled product, and packaged, or labeled product. This group of workers comprised more

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[70] ———, *Kill and Chill*; John R. Commons, "Labor Conditions in Meat Packing and the Recent Strike," *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 19, no. November (1904). 217-18; Horowitz, *Negro and White*. 17.
[71] MacLachlan, *Kill and Chill*. 218.
[72] Jed O., Interview (Edmonton: 2004).

than two-thirds of the labour force by the mid-twentieth century and earned little more than the base rate in most jobs.[73] During the first half of the twentieth century the process of killing, dismembering and loading a single animal involved as many as 157 workers.[74]

Edmonton's diversified packinghouses exemplified modern design. Packing companies hired professional architects and engineers whose designs used gravity to reduce the cost of energy and human labour. From the killing floor workers dropped various parts of the carcass, such as the hide, internal organs, and offal, through chutes to a wide variety of physically separate departments on different floors of the building for processing. Nevertheless, harsh conditions limited the labour efficiencies that could be achieved. In the stench of the hide cellar, located in the basement, half a dozen unskilled workers performed the strenuous and messy job of laying flat the hides heavy with blood and mud, and applying salt to preserve them. Physical fatigue was a significant factor affecting the pace of this job, which had not yet been mechanized. In the Offal Department, rank with the fetid smell of excrement, unskilled workers used hot water to clean animal intestines – called casings once cleaned – for stuffing sausages and wieners, while those in the Casings Department graded them. Workers in Offal also trimmed meat off less valuable parts of the animal, removed internal organs, and the tongue, for use in processed meats like sausage. The constant process of washing with hot water created a heat and humidity that intensified the stench and discomfort of the Offal and Casings Departments.[75] The Sausage Kitchen, the Lard Department, and the Tank House were also hot, humid departments because they involved cooking the product. Beef and pork fat relied on gravity's pull to descend through a chute

[73] Grover, "Winnipeg Meat Packing Workers". 22; Halpern, *Down on the Killing Floor*. 18-9, 26.
[74] Grover, "Winnipeg Meat Packing Workers". 23.
[75] Horowitz, *Negro and White*. 20.

into a crusher, and were loaded into three 2,000-pound tanks where the lard was extracted through cooking.[76] The Tank House was where the bones, guts, hooves and any other inedible or condemned parts of the carcass were cooked to manufacture oils and fertilizer. This was the most malodorous department in the plant, and, not surprisingly, a difficult area to keep efficiently staffed.

Management kept most other areas of the plant very cool to preserve the meat, and used mechanization to move product quickly, which could trigger staffing problems because of worker illnesses and injuries. Once the animals had been eviscerated and disassembled into market-ready carcasses they were placed in a "fresh cooler" overnight and then into the "sales cooler," both of which were kept at a temperature slightly above freezing. The meat was then sent to the Beef or Pork Cuts Department where an assembly line of semi-skilled workers performed very specific cuts on parts of the carcass that moved past them on a conveyor belt, such as taking the rib out of the bellies or trimming ham.[77] These rooms were held at a temperature only a few degrees warmer. The pork carcass was disassembled fully, but beef carcasses were split into four quarters and sold that way. Each massive quarter weighed between 200 and 350 pounds. The quarters were hauled to refrigerated railways cars by beef luggers. Management chose the huskiest workers in the plant for this physically strenuous labour, because productivity depended largely on each individual's strength and stamina.

In the Sausage Kitchen workers cooked, cured, and smoked meat to create a wide range of consumer products, including sausages, wieners, bacon, sliced and canned meats.

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[76] Jed O., Interview.
[77] Harry S., Helen S., and Irene S., Interview (Edmonton: 2004).

Labourers in the Table-Ready Meats department required deft handwork for efficiency. For example, bacon had to be shingled onto cardboard manually, cooked wieners skinned, and sausages linked and twisted by hand until well into the postwar era. **[Figure 7]** The operation made use of every part of the animal to achieve maximum efficiency. Inedible parts of the animal ended up in the areas where soap, fertilizer, and feed were manufactured from byproducts like dried blood.[78]

By the 1950s and 60s a variety of new developments helped convince Canada's meatpacking majors to invest heavily in new technologies and expertise. The shift was driven in part by a growing public concern about the inhumane slaughter of livestock, which dated back to nineteenth century Britain's animal protection movement. In Europe the principle of stunning an animal unconscious before drawing any blood had become entrenched by the 1890s, and specialized firearms were in use by the early twentieth century. Relative insensitivity in Canada on the issue of humane slaughter was underlined in 1949 when both a farmer and a trucker in Edmonton were fined for cruelty after they beat a cow so badly that the animal had to be condemned. The men had tried to force the cow to jump into a truck lacking an appropriate loading device.[79] All the major packing companies implemented changes designed to make them compliant with new government regulations that prohibited sticking conscious or semiconscious animals. The knocking hammer for stunning animals before they were slaughtered was replaced with a captive bolt stunner in the 1950s. This reduced the time, physical precision, and strength required for a worker to stun each animal between the eyes, compared to using a sledgehammer. The worker was able to

[78] Ella Goruk, Interview (Edmonton: 2006).
[79] C. Hamilton Kenney, "Chuting the Bull," *Canadian Food Industries*, no. September (1949).

deliver a less physically demanding bolt roughly every two minutes.[80] Management's growing realization that brutal slaughter methods were costly added impetus to its drive for change.[81]

The primary impetus for technological innovation, however, was rising labour costs. Management used newly mechanized processes and automation to both reduce skill levels and eliminate jobs. Edmonton's Canada Packers plant was the first in the city and among the first packinghouses in the country to mechanize the beef kill in 1952 with the company's cutting-edge CanPak system.[82] When it was first implemented in the Edmonton plant, the system increased the number of cattle slaughtered by between forty and seventy head per hour.[83] The overhead rail system made possible a continuous flow of cattle much like what had been instituted on the hog kill at the turn of the century.[84] Cattle were hoisted immediately after being stunned and the carcass moved on the rail through different workstations, instead of being lowered to a siding bed to be skinned and dismembered. It was much easier for workers to perform their job efficiently because, instead of moving around the carcass in a bent position, they stayed in one place while the carcass moved past them. A mechanical hide-remover, which evolved until it could pull the cattle hide off completely with the aid of two semi-skilled workers, was another important innovation because it eliminated one of the most highly skilled and costly workers, the floorsman. Termed the Moscow Mule because of its origins in the Soviet Union, the automatic hide-

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[80] MacLachlan, *Kill and Chill.* 172.
[81] *Ibid.* 176.
[82] The large Swift plant mechanized the beef kill in the early 1960s, but Gainer's, the city's smallest packinghouse, did not mechanize until the late 1960s.
[83] Jack Hampson, "Alberta Staff Reports, Locals 233-511," (Edmonton: LAC, CFAW fonds, MG 28 I-186, PWOC and UPWA series, Vol 24, 1951-55). Local 243, 7 January 1953.
[84] MacLachlan, *Kill and Chill.* 172-3.

puller reduced from five to two the number of workers needed to remove the hide from cattle. **[Figure 8]** The continuous rail system allowed management to further subdivide the work and add workstations to the beef killing line. [85]

Management introduced a variety of other technologies that allowed foremen to speed up the line. By the 1960s and 70s workers in Edmonton's largest packinghouses were using knives powered by electricity or compressed air, as well as electronic slicers and weigh scales.[86] Packing companies developed new machinery that steam-skinned wieners and packaged them, which were tasks previously performed manually by women.[87] These technologies were a major source of productivity gains, in some cases doubling the number of cattle processed per hour from fifteen to thirty.[88] "Productivity" rose dramatically, particularly in the 1970s when the new processes were well established, increasing thirty-nine per cent from 1975 to 1984 alone.[89]

The impact of these new technologies on the labour process is captured in government records that track annual average wage rates in the Canadian meatpacking industry between the 1940s and the 1970s. Jobs like Lugger and Floorsman had disappeared by 1969 and the job of Carcass Splitter appeared. Although the job of splitting the cattle carcass always existed, in the earlier years this work was performed with a simple cleaver.

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[85] *Ibid.* 173.
[86] A number of innovations were developed in the United States. Swift Canadian's relationship to its American parent may have speeded up the transfer of technologies to Canada. Fink, *Cutting into the Meatpacking Line*. 19.
[87] Vicky T., Interview (Edmonton: 2004).
[88] MacLachlan, *Kill and Chill*. 172.
[89] "Productivity" is a term used by economists as a euphemism for reducing labour costs. UFCW's national leaders used the term in the 1980's to support their argument for larger wage gains. Craig Heron and Robert H. Storey, eds., *On the Job : Confronting the Labour Process in Canada* (Kingston, Ont.: McGill-Queen's University Press,1986); UFCW, "Productivity of Canadian Meat Packing Workers," (Edmonton: UFCW Local 1118, c.1985).

By the 1970s it was performed with a chainsaw, which appears to have convinced record-keepers to create a separate occupational category for the work. Distinctions between Beef Boning and Pork Boning and between Beef Cutting and Pork Cutting as separate occupations had also disappeared, and there were more meat trimming jobs. The job of Bacon Wrapper and Packager was replaced with Hand Packager. As the plant processes became more highly mechanized and automated, management was forced to employ a growing array of skilled tradesmen to maintain the operation. In the 1940s it was common for packinghouses to employ a carpenter, a machinist, a steam fitter and a stationary engineer, but by the 1970s there were also more electricians, millwrights, and mechanics in the plants, and as many as four classes of stationary engineer.[90]

3. Modern Recruitment

The labour process, together with the pools of labour available locally, helped shape the types of workers management recruited to work in Edmonton packinghouses. As we will see in the discussion of management cultures in the last section of this chapter, intersecting notions of class, gender, race, and ethnicity were an important influence on recruitment strategies. One consistency in Edmonton packinghouses from the early 1900s when the first plants opened until 1979 when they began to shut down, was the gender and ethnic profile of those in both management and white collar positions such as administration and sales. These positions were filled almost exclusively with white Anglo-Celtic males who dominated the local labour pool, particularly prior to World War Two. Before the 1960s many of the men had little more than a high school education and often rose from entry level positions in the company, but by the 1960s and 70s the companies were hiring a growing number of

[90] Canada, *Wage Rates, Salaries, and Hours of Labour, 1947-1983.*

university graduates, often from outside the community, to fill more specialized positions, particularly in areas such as personnel and industrial relations.

Alberta census data reveals that women represented just three per cent of the salaried workforce in the provincial meatpacking industry in 1911, a figure that is linked in part to the gender imbalance in the provincial population at this early stage of Euro-Canadian settlement.[91] By World War Two this gender imbalance had disappeared and labour shortages pushed the proportion of women to well over a third of salaried workers before dropping back to between twenty and twenty-five per cent in the 1960s and 70s.[92] We know that in 1921 ninety per cent of these women were born in either Canada, the United Kingdom or the United States, which suggests that, like male white-collar workers, they were seen as white and were predominantly of Anglo-Celtic heritage.[93] The women likely filled low-paid clerical positions.[94]

In Edmonton packinghouses, like those across the United States and the rest of Canada, males held roughly ninety per cent of meatpacking production jobs until World War Two, monopolizing completely the more highly paid slaughtering and meat cutting processes and jobs involving machinery or supervision. They also filled all skilled trades positions. Provincial census data reveals that in 1936, for example, there were no women in the most skilled industry occupation of Butcher or Meat Cutter. Anglo-Canadians or Anglo immigrants dominated these jobs with forty-two per cent of them Canadian born and twenty-

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[91] In 1911 women comprised thirty-nine per cent of Edmonton's population. Canada. Dominion Bureau of Statistics., *Census of Canada, Areas and Population*, ed. Labour Canada (1911). Table II.
[92] Statistics Canada, *The Slaughtering and Meat Packing Industry and the Sausage and Casings Industry* 1949-79.
[93] Canada. Dominion Bureau of Statistics, *Census: Occupations, Alberta*, Table 2, (1921).
[94] Here I'm relying on Graham Lowe's work, which documents the trend toward female dominance of low-paid clerical jobs in the early twentieth century. Graham S. Lowe, *Women in the Administrative Revolution: The Feminization of Clerical Work* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987).

six per cent born in the United Kingdom. Another twenty-four per cent were born in Europe, reflecting the impact of high rates of European immigration to the Canadian Prairies from the late twentieth century until 1929.[95] Of these skilled men, more than half identified as English, fifteen per cent as German and nearly the same number again as Eastern or Southern European -- most often Ukrainian or Polish.

Men in semi-skilled and unskilled positions were more likely to be European immigrants, with thirty-four per cent Canadian-born and only twenty-four per cent born in the United Kingdom. Less than half of these men identified as English and nearly forty per cent reported German, Eastern or Southern European heritage. One commonality among both groups of men, however, was a relatively low rate of marriage: Only roughly sixty per cent were married. The physical strength and endurance required in many of these jobs likely made the work too difficult for older men and, in the context of Depression-era meatpacking wages, men in unskilled jobs may not have been able to afford the financial responsibilities of marriage.[96]

Women employed in Alberta packinghouses prior to World War Two were confined to the low-paid processing end of the operation, which included canning, producing and packaging sausages, wieners, bacon and table-ready meats. Although they represented only about ten per cent of the production labour force, women occupied forty-two per cent of packing jobs according to the 1936 Census. Women were also much more likely to be Canadian-born, of Anglo-Celtic heritage, and unmarried compared to the men.[97] The role of

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[95] Dominion Bureau of Statistics Canada, *Census of the Prairie Provinces, 1936,* Table 7, Gainfully Occupied, 14 Years of Age and over, by Occupation, Conjugal Condition, and Sex; Tables 9 and 10, Gainfully Occupied, 14 Years of Age and over, by Occupation, Birthplace, Racial Origin and Sex.
[96] *Ibid.*
[97] *Ibid.*

management ideals in shaping the particularities of these demographics will be explored in the last section of this chapter.

Since most jobs required little skill, many workers in Edmonton's packing plants prior to World War Two were recent immigrants with minimal English from a peasant background, or the sons and daughters of prairie farm families that had immigrated in the early twentieth century from Europe. Packing companies actively recruited hardy young men and women coming off the farm, who were accustomed to manual labour, and familiar with the sights, sounds, and smells, of livestock. In 1939 a Canada Packers recruiter stopped by the road to hire George, an eighteen-year-old youth working in a horse field on a farm just outside Edmonton. Eager to leave the farm, George said in an interview many years later that he was driven to the packinghouse the next day, bypassing a long line of job applicants outside the plant. "A hundred people in line waiting for jobs and I went right through the line." The man explained that management preferred to hire farm workers: "Farmer boy – strong back, weak mind...they claimed as we were, a little lacking, you know...[farm people] weren't as fussy and stuff like these city people, you know."[98] He was paid forty-one cents an hour, which meant a lot to him as a youth who had been placed on the farm as a foster child when he was eight and who had been earning just five dollars a month plus room and board.[99] But most workers were hired through someone they knew, usually a relative, because management preferred to build its labour force from families that had proven their suitability for the work.

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[98] *George, Interview (Edmonton: 2004). An asterisk (*) indicates the use of a pseudonym.
[99] *Ibid.* John Hanley Grover found the same preference for young, husky men and women off the farm among company recruiters in his study of Winnipeg packinghouse workers during the 1930's and 40's. Grover, "Winnipeg Meat Packing Workers". 21.

World War Two changed the demographic profile of the production workforce in Alberta packinghouses dramatically as labour shortages triggered an influx of women workers, including some married women with children. Although the proportion of women filling production jobs in Edmonton packinghouses peaked at nearly a third of the workforce before subsiding, it stabilized at twenty per cent after the war, which was double the number of women workers in 1939.[100] Women's numbers remained firm until the 1960s when industry restructuring using new technologies and processes began to eliminate a disproportionate number of "female" jobs in the meat processing end of the business, which was easier to mechanize than the slaughtering process. The number of women in Edmonton packinghouses shrank to about fifteen per cent in the 1970s.[101]

Based on national census figures, we know that the majority of women and men in Canadian packinghouses were Canadian-born in the postwar decades, and the proportion of Canadian-born women declined from roughly eighty per cent during the war to sixty-five per cent in 1971. Among men the proportion born in Canada rose from as low as fifty-five per cent among unskilled men to seventy-one per cent as job turnover dropped with rising wages and greater job security following unionization.[102] Nonetheless, the heaviest, most disgusting and disturbing jobs were always hard to fill, and local packing companies found many recruits in the waves of new immigrants arriving in Edmonton during the postwar decades to

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[100] Labour Canada, Strikes and Lockouts Files (Canada Packers, Swift, Burns, Gainers, Edmonton); ———, Strikes and Lockouts Files (Canada Packers Strike, Edmonton), (LAC, 1945).

[101] Statistics Canada, *General Review of the Manufacturing Industries of Canada*, V. 2, Supplementary Data and Analysis, 1940-48, cat. 31-201. ———, *The Slaughtering and Meat Packing Industry and the Sausage and Casings Industry,* 1949-79.

[102] Data on immigration and ethnicity in the meatpacking industry is not available at the municipal or provincial level for the postwar years. Canada. Dominion Bureau of Statistics., *Census: Labour Force, Occupations and Industries*, Canada, Table 12, (1951); ———, *Census: Labour Force, Occupations and Industries*, Canada, Table 21, ed. Trade and Commerce (1961); Statistics Canada, *Census: Labour Force, Occupations*, Canada, Table 4, ed. Labour Canada (1971).

find opportunity in its booming economy. The packinghouses often hired refugees from troubled parts of the world, including European Displaced Persons following World War Two, Hungarians who fled the 1956 Uprising, and Chileans fleeing the tyranny of President Augusto Pinochet in the 1970s.[103]

Another important shift in the postwar decades was the increasing number of workers who were married, particularly women workers who, by 1960, had won the right to keep their packing job after marriage and maternity leaves. Census occupation data for Edmonton reveal that the number of married women workers increased from only seven per cent in 1936 and sixteen per cent at the end of the war to roughly 60 per cent in 1971. In comparison, the number of married packing men rose from sixty per cent in the interwar period to seventy-five or even eighty per cent in the 1960s and 70s.[104]

4. Manly Modern Management

When it opened in 1936, Canada Packers' new Edmonton packinghouse embodied corporate Canada's modernist imagination, winning the Gold Medal for architecture at a Toronto exhibition a year later.[105] Built of brick, its box-like strong lean lines effectively conveyed the values of industriousness, hard-headed rational efficiency, and control, which

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[103] In interviews a number of long-term workers mentioned the arrival of refugees fleeing war and political oppression in these geographic areas.

[104] Canada, Dominion Bureau of Statistics *Census of the Prairie Provinces*, Table 7, Gainfully Occupied, 14 Years of Age and over, by Occupation, Conjugal Condition, and Sex; Tables 9 and 10, Gainfully Occupied, 14 Years of Age and over, by Occupation, Birthplace, Racial Origin and Sex (1936); ---------. *Census*, Labour Force, Occupations and Industries, Edmonton, Table 11, (1951); ———, *Census*: Labour Force, Occupation, Edmonton, Table 23," (1961); Statistics Canada., *Census*, Labour Force, Occupations, Edmonton, Table 6, (1971). Note: The 1971 data is for a broader occupation category -- "Food Beverage and Related Processing Occupations." This means the category captures more than just meatpacking workers in Edmonton and it is unclear exactly what proportion meatpacking workers comprised.

[105] Architect Eric R. Arthur was awarded the Gold Medal at the Toronto Chapter Exhibition of Architecture and Allied Arts in 1937 for the design of Edmonton's Canada Packers plant. Arthur, "Canada Packers Plant at Edmonton." Christopher Dummitt, *The Manly Modern : Masculinity in Postwar Canada* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2007).

have long been linked to white middle-class masculinity.[106] As a mass production industry in which an all-male management had authority over a male-dominated workforce, Canadian packinghouses were an important cultural arena where white, Anglo-Canadian middle-class managers at various levels strove to strengthen their social position by asserting their difference from "others," particularly women and ethnically diverse production men. In Figures 3 and 4 the near absence of women and the dramatic contrast between men in the front office and men on the Beef Kill Floor in the Edmonton plant make explicit the gender as well as class hierarchies operating within local packinghouses in the early and mid-twentieth century.[107]

I now bring a gendered lens to the cultures of management that operated in Edmonton packinghouses, paying close attention to differences of race and ethnicity, as well as class. How did shifting notions of white middle-class masculinity help shape modern management in the plants, particularly management's response to the new class dynamics of the era of industrial unionism and centralized bargaining? In their study of masculinities in the context of work organizations, David Collinson and Jeff Hearn emphasize that organizations are profoundly historical and variable "sites for the reproduction of men's power and masculinities."[108] As David Morgan has explained, the historically strong connection between masculinity and the public sphere of production under industrial capitalism has tended to obscure the gendering of working and middle-class men. According to Morgan, studies of class experiences and practices have revealed many different ways of being a man

[106] For example, the concrete livestock ramp was seen as a major innovation that would outlast wooden ramps. Arthur, "Canada Packers Plant at Edmonton." Dummitt, *The Manly Modern.*
[107] The only woman in the photograph of the front office is the receptionist/switchboard operator.
[108] Hearn, "Men and Masculinities." 289

based on fine "distinctions, such as those between 'mental' and 'manual,' 'skilled' and 'unskilled," or even workers in different departments or offices."[109] He argues that particular masculinities become powerful within a historically specific context because they are "more dominant, more valued, or more persuasive than others."[110]

4.1 The Origins of Manly Modern Management

Edmonton's meatpacking industry developed at a time when middle-management men staffing the large new American and Canadian firms that emerged in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were remaking middle-class masculinity to strengthen their social authority in the face of new threats on a number of fronts. Traditional codes of masculinity from the earlier era of small-scale competitive capitalism, which had idealized hard work, economic independence, and a strong will, particularly self-control and emotional restraint, held fading appeal by 1900. The new era of monopoly capitalism had created fewer opportunities for middle-class men in large corporate bureaucracies to achieve economic independence. As Anthony Rotundo has explained, "in the new order, every businessman had to submit -- the successful one was the man who submitted to the fewest others."[111] The man who secured one of those positions was expected to be "a professional manipulator of people and a team player in the service of organizational duty," according to Angel Kwolek-Folland, which was a far cry from the image of rugged individualism and economic independence that characterized white middle-class masculinity in the early and mid-

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[109] David Morgan, "Class and Masculinity," in *Handbook of Studies on Men and Masculinities*, ed. Jeff Hearn Michael S. Kimmel, R.W. Connell (Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications, Inc., 2005). 170

[110] *Ibid.*

[111] E. Anthony Rotundo, *American Manhood: Transformations in Masculinity from the Revolution to the Modern Era* (New York: BasicBooks, 1993). 249

nineteenth century.[112] These developments occurred as immigrants, workers, and women were fighting for the vote, and as women began entering the public sphere, including corporate offices, in unprecedented numbers, posing additional threats to white middle-class masculinity. Finally, the rising incidence of neurasthenia, an illness unique to middle-class men of this era suffering nervous strain from "excessive brain work," raised the spectre of bodily weakness compared to "virile" working-class and immigrant men.[113]

Gail Bederman argues that in reaction, "ideals like aggressiveness, physical force, and male sexuality" gained primacy by 1930 among middle-class men in America. Bederman has demonstrated that these men drew on a discourse of "civilization" and "primitiveness" in contradictory ways to assert white male superiority.[114] Anthony Rotundo and others have shown that middle-class men expressed these ideals with new interests and enthusiasms, particularly a celebration of male muscularity, male-only organizations, and "primitive" passions that were now valued as distinctively male, such as aggressive competitiveness, ambition, and physical assertiveness.[115] A new concept of "manly reason" also reflected this shift: "In this view, male rationality was not a capacity for deep, logical reflection but rather an absence of complex emotions -- an absence which freed men to act boldly and decisively."[116] These manly ideals gained popularity among middle-class men across North America. Many men, feeling frustrated by the lack of opportunity for economic independence and individualism in a middle-management or white-collar corporate job,

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[112] Angel Kwolek-Folland, *Engendering Business: Men and Women in the Corporate Office, 1870-1930* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994). 47
[113] Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995). 14
[114] *Ibid.*
[115] Rotundo, *American Manhood.* 227
[116] *Ibid.* 225

turned to a wide range of athletics, particularly martial sports, and valued impulse and instinct anew. Men used these activities and the values underlying them to counter the potential "over-civilization" and feminization from their sedentary jobs.

Within Edmonton's meatpacking industry this more aggressive brand of middle-class masculinity often manifested itself in a tough stance with workers, particularly among head office executives who were thousands of miles away. The arrival of the American Swift company before World War One with its large modern corporate bureaucracy likely made the shifting ideals of middle-class masculinity an important force shaping the workforce and class relations in the largest local packinghouse. The entrepreneurial businessmen who built Edmonton's packinghouses displayed an understanding of middle-class masculinity that conformed to what David Collinson and Jeff Hearn have described as the early twentieth-century image of the "sober, self-made modern capitalist who adopted a paternalistic and dutiful approach to management."[117] Their ability to achieve business success through efficiencies wrought by hard work and persistence earned them popular respect and entitlement to their wealth. Despite some differences, this pervasive ideology, combined with the overriding imperative of business success, resulted in a relatively controlling management style with limited autonomy for local middle management.

In Edmonton, John Gainer was typical of late nineteenth century craftsmen in Canada who parlayed their skills into a successful industrial enterprise. Born in Ontario and orphaned young, Gainer moved to Manitoba where he started a cartage business, then moved

[117] Hearn, "Men and Masculinities." 297. This notion of modern masculinity contrasts starkly with an increasingly hegemonic early twenty-first century "transnational business masculinity" identified by R.W. Connell, according to Hearn and Collinson. Linked to patterns of world trade and communication dominated by the global North, this notion of masculinity is "marked by egocentrism, highly precarious and conditional forms of loyalty, and a declining sense of responsibility. It is also increasingly libertarian in regard to sexuality." 295.

with his wife and children in 1891 to Strathcona, on the south side of the North Saskatchewan River in Edmonton, where he established a small retail butcher shop at the front of his modest family home. When the city's dramatic growth created a strong market for meats by the 1890s Gainer expanded the operation, then in 1904 built a new industrial-scale packinghouse in nearby Strathcona and concentrated on the wholesale meat trade.[118] This plant endured until 1980.

Alberta business historian Henry Klassen's account of John Gainer's entrepreneurial success in Alberta elaborates values that are characteristic of the early twentieth-century self-made man's ideal of respectable middle-class masculinity. Focusing on John Gainer's ability to develop the business from a modest shop into a "major integrated meat packing firm" by growing "slowly" and adapting to changing demands and opportunities, Klassen draws on a discourse of manly modern enterprise, initiative, and prudence. Noting that Gainer's wife sold baked goods in the first shop, and his sons took over the business after his death in 1937, Klassen endorses traditional patriarchal gender roles. The Gainer firm is also lauded as an example of the "small to medium-sized, family-owned and -operated firms [that have] distinguished industry in Alberta," implicitly contrasting this kind of "family affair" with large, impersonal corporations in which owners are not involved in the local community.[119] As we will see, these values and ideals helped foster a hands-on and highly paternalistic management culture at the local Gainer plant.

The Swift company, which bought Edmonton's largest and newest packinghouse in 1908, had a larger geographic reach than any other meatpacking company in the country at

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[118] Klassen, *A Business History of Alberta*. 90
[119] *Ibid.* 90

the time. It had achieved this by buying up a number of small Canadian companies with packing plants in major urban centres throughout the country between 1902 and 1926.[120] Although its founder, Chicago-area industrialist Gustavus Swift, died in 1903, at the time the Edmonton plant was purchased the company was achieving tremendous growth and business success under his successors. Its management culture was heavily influenced by Gustavus Swift, who made a priority of training management in company policies and methods as a way to rationalize and control his large and complex business operations.[121] In Edmonton this likely meant that the head office tried to tightly control local management through careful training about its goals and strategies, and expected those men to conform to its corporate culture.

Pat Burns, who built Edmonton's third major meatpacking plant was revered as a "self-made man" who became an exemplar of the late nineteenth-century manly middle-class ideal because of the business success he achieved through efficiencies and control. Burns, who was semi-literate, had built a meatpacking empire centred in Calgary by capitalizing on rapid population growth and railway construction in the region, which created new sources for livestock and markets.[122] Initially he slaughtered the animals himself and sold the cut meat to workers on western railway construction gangs and in lumber and mining camps, but as sales expanded he raised cattle on his Alberta ranch, slaughtered them in the packing plant he built in Calgary, and sold the meat and byproducts through a network of branch houses with cold storage space for the wholesale and retail trade.[123] By World War One he had

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[120] MacLachlan, *Kill and Chill*. 152-53
[121] American National Business Hall of Fame. http://www.anbhf.org/laureates/gfswift.html
[122] Sproule, "The Role of Patrick Burns in the Development of Western Canada". 133-34.
[123] Klassen, *A Business History of Alberta*. 89; Rennie, "The Growth and Development of Canada's Meat Packing Industry."

turned his business into a multi-species operation by tapping the growing hog production on Western farms to sell bacon to serve the British market. He also achieved horizontal integration by buying up meatpacking plants from some of his competitors. Burns' ability to dominate the Western Canadian meatpacking industry during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries allowed him to exploit the modern Western economy and amass a personal fortune.[124] His company, which was one of the largest vertically and horizontally integrated manufacturing companies in the country in the early twentieth century, was seen as a potent regional symbol of modernity in the Canadian West.[125] Despite the size of his operations, Burns remained closely involved in running his plants, personally managing a 1920 strike in Calgary when he had superintendents and managers in charge.[126] This highly controlling management style likely meant local management had limited autonomy in the Edmonton plant during the early twentieth century.

Although the 1936 Canada Packers plant was the last major packinghouse built in Edmonton, its management culture was quite important locally because of the company's size and stature in the Canadian meatpacking industry. Canada Packers formed in Toronto in 1927 through a series of mergers and acquisitions to become Canada's largest and most diverse meatpacking operation – a status it held for more than half a century.[127] The most important company in that merger was William Davies Company Ltd., which actively orchestrated the deal to eliminate the intense competition that was preventing any one company in the Toronto area from decisively dominating the market. The management

[124] When Burns died in 1937 the tax on his estate paid off the provincial deficit, allowing the Social Credit Party to not only balance the budget, but permanently eliminate the Provincial Sales Tax. MacEwan, *Pat Burns, Cattle King.*
[125] MacLachlan, *Kill and Chill.* 149; Klassen, *A Business History of Alberta.* 152.
[126] Bright, "Meatpackers' Strike at Calgary 1920." 5
[127] Canada Packers Ltd., *The Story of Our Products.* 31-33, 41; MacLachlan, *Kill and Chill.* 188-91.

culture of Canada Packers was heavily influenced by Joseph Flavelle, whose ideas as president of William Davies Packing Company Ltd. made that operation a model of modern efficiency, processing every part of the animal and producing as many as one hundred and fifty byproducts that were used to make everything from soap to paint bristles and tennis racket strings.[128]

As a "captain of industry" during the expansive era that lasted until the end of World War One, Joseph Flavelle became a luminary in the Canadian modernist firmament. His biographer, Michael Bliss, has explained that Flavelle came to symbolize "the pure spirit of capitalism" for many Canadians. The national renown he achieved as "the poor boy who made good" using strategic efficiencies to turn his pork-packing operation into the largest in the British Empire made him a "business genius" in the eyes of a mainstream society awed by industrialization. His public image was enhanced by a personal code of "hard work, honesty, sobriety, and daily prayer." This image was tarnished, however, by his fall from grace during World War One following allegations of wartime profiteering.[129]

Joseph Flavelle represented a new generation of meatpacking entrepreneurs who were not craftsmen, but businessmen who grasped the logic of the operation but had never held a knife or taken pride in an ability to butcher proficiently.[130] These men prized rational efficiency, tight cost controls and constant expansion as the keys to success. Joy Parr has demonstrated that the shift from men who were primarily craftsmen to those who were businessmen at the helm of Canadian manufacturing enterprises encouraged a notion of middle-class masculinity rooted in "money" rather than "muscle." In addition to achieving

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[128] Rennie, "The Growth and Development of Canada's Meat Packing Industry." 19.
[129] Bliss, *A Canadian Millionaire.* x
[130] *Ibid.* 185.

cost efficiencies, this ideal, which was actively promoted in trade journals, was designed to entrench class difference by distancing male white-collar workers from production men. Managers were expected to spend their time coming up with cost-cutting ideas rather than performing the manual labour involved in executing those ideas. The result was a less empathic management style, which helped facilitate the rise of scientific management.[131]

James Stanley (J.S.) McLean, who engineered the complex 1927 merger that created Canada Packers and became the company's first president, also exemplified the modern Canadian industrial leader in pursuit of business efficiencies, control, and growth. An accounting wizard with a university degree in maths and science, J.S. trained under Joseph Flavelle and married Flavelle's niece. Described by Joseph Flavelle as "strong, creative, and efficient," but "a rather difficult man in his temper," J.S. single-mindedly sought ways to increase the efficiency of the operation by cutting costs.[132] This hard-driving manager retained a major financial interest in the publicly-traded company until he turned over the presidency to his son William (Bill) Flavelle McLean in 1954, a month before he died.[133]

4.2 Industrial Unionism and National Pattern Bargaining

When unionization during World War Two and the imposition of centralized bargaining by government in a postwar labour dispute posed new challenges to management power, senior executives of the Big Three packing companies responded in ways that exemplified manly modern ideals, particularly the effort to exert local control. J.S. McLean flew out personally from Toronto to intervene in a work stoppage on the hog kill floor at the

[131] Parr, *Gender of Breadwinners*. 154-55. Scientific management was developed by American Frederick Winslow Taylor, who broke down the work process into discrete tasks, each timed by efficiency experts to increase productivity based on the idea that there was "one best way" to perform a job.
[132] Bliss, *A Canadian Millionaire*. 185.
[133] Athanassakos and Harling, "Canada Packers." 92.

company's Edmonton plant during World War Two. According to a union report, local superintendent Jim Long urged the union to stick to its position just before McLean arrived so that Long wouldn't lose his job, which suggests that McLean was an exacting president who inspired fear in local management because of his rigid expectations.[134] Nevertheless, his tough-mindedness was respected and had far-reaching influence within the industry. According to a former Canada Packers foreman in Edmonton, J.S. McLean "...was a businessman, but he wasn't awful...you've got to have sting, like a bee, to motivate people. And that's how the management operated."[135]

Anne Forrest has argued that the national system of pattern bargaining was sustained for nearly forty years because it met the needs of packing companies, not just because of government intervention and union strength. These powerful companies saw centralized collective bargaining as more efficient and reliable than the "mechanism of the labour market."[136] Drawing on the language of Michel Foucault, I argue that the complex and bureaucratic centralized system of bargaining appealed to the male owner-managers of Canada's largest packing companies and their top executives as a "technology" of rationalist planning and efficiency aimed at exerting greater control over workers through labour relations.[137] In an interview, former Burns vice president William Goetz emphasized the system's logistical efficiencies, explaining that meatpacking companies with geographically scattered plants supported centralized bargaining because contracts across the country were settled "in one fell swoop." The companies also felt national pattern bargaining eliminated

[134] Hampson, Interview Transcript.
[135] *George, Interview.
[136] Forrest, "The Rise and Fall of National Bargaining." 402.
[137]Michel Foucault, "The Subject and Power," *Critical Inquiry* 8, no. 4 (Summer) (1982).

chronic strikes at the more militant plants, which got "pulled along by the pattern bargain."[138] Most importantly, in an industry with highly concentrated ownership, capitalist owners came to see the system of national pattern bargaining as a vehicle for eliminating wages from competition.

The immediate postwar decades have been characterized as a "high modern" era in Canada because of a renewed confidence in the potential of "man" to control the economy, the environment, the self, and society, to achieve "progress."[139] Oversight of the Canadian government's war effort by a male technocratic elite, which was viewed as highly successful, together with the emergence of the welfare state, helped fuel a popular resurgence of modern notions of human control and progress on both the right and the left.[140] There was a dominant assumption that rational efficiency, planning, and control using the expertise of credentialed, predominantly male professionals like scientists, engineers, and bureaucrats would promote the greater good. It was also a time when patriarchal values were being reinscribed within Canadian culture and society after years of Depression and war that disrupted traditional gender roles by creating massive unemployment among men and then drawing an unprecedented number of women into the workforce. As Christopher Dummitt has noted, "In this context, those who linked ideal masculinity with the benefits of modern technology and progress provided contemporary justifications for gender hierarchies that were under threat."[141]

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[138] Goetz, Interview Transcript. (Calgary: Ian MacLachlan, 1995).
[139] Dummitt, *The Manly Modern*. 3.
[140] For detail on the scope of government intervention in the Canadian economy during World War Two see, Sandford F. Borins, "World War II Crown Corporations Their Wartime Role and Peacetime Privatization," *Canadian Public Administration* 25, no. 3 (1982). Dummitt, *The Manly Modern*. 9.
[141] Dummitt, *The Manly Modern*. 2.

Patricia A. McCormack's critique of the "romance of progress" in historical accounts of northern Alberta and the Canadian North even into the late twentieth century, highlights the ways in which this interpretation constructs natural resource "development" as inevitable, thereby legitimizing "the status quo of government and industrial dominance."[142] Social theorist Arthur J. Seidler has emphasized the interconnections between the emergence of a notion of masculinity that emphasized reason and self-control, particularly emotional self-control, and the development of a capitalist economic system in the seventeenth century. Drawing on the work of Immanuel Kant as pivotal, Seidler argues that Enlightenment thinkers cultivated the idea that men are split between reason and desire, but it is reason that guarantees their capacity for morality.[143] He notes that privileging reason alongside the development of capitalism encouraged the idea that the capitalist market was ruled by "impersonal laws," and was "the source of all value."[144] Subordinating emotion to reason, which undermined knowledge coming out of an individual's experience and desires, also provided a moral justification for individual ambition and success and was used to legitimize the development of both capitalism and European imperialism, which was presented as "bringing advances of reason and science to a world supposedly void of reason and civilization."[145]

This notion of masculinity appears to have been most fully embraced by men from the entrepreneurial capitalist class who owned the means of production in the Canadian

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[142] Patricia A. McCormack, "Romancing the Northwest as Prescriptive History: Fort Chipewyan and the Northern Expansion of the Canadian State," in *The Uncovered Past: Roots of Northern Alberta Societies*, ed. Patricia A. McCormack and R.G. Ironside (Edmonton: Canadian Circumpolar Institute, University of Alberta, 1993). 89.
[143] Victor J. Seidler, *Rediscovering Masculinity Reason, Language, and Sexuality* (London ; New York: Routledge, 1989), 2.
[144] *Ibid.*, 15, 46.
[145] *Ibid.*, 15.

meatpacking industry in the early twentieth century. In the decades following World War Two, however, the next generation of the industry's ruling elite imposed these manly ideals on middle management with renewed vigour, sometimes with unintended consequences. Christopher Dummitt has argued that the strategies of middle-class men who drew heavily on these values often became alienation from the work process and from the self by the excessive focus on efficiencies and control, an alienation that was then "mapped onto other social hierarchies" such as race and gender, as well as class.[146] Another unintended consequence of what Dummitt describes as "manly modern" ideals is a sense of resentment on the part of those men denied – often by class or ethnicity – "the full benefits of male citizenship that would have then placed them above women and other men."[147] In comparison, Victor J. Seidler emphasizes the harmful impact of these values for the men who embraced them. Seidler found that in the mid- and late-twentieth century these men continued to be damaged and distorted by Enlightenment thinking that identified masculinity with reason, and privileged reason over feelings. The result was the men's disconnection from and denigration of their emotional selves, which robbed them of a crucial source of self-knowledge and self-understanding -- an enormous price, he argues, for masculine privilege.[148]

These pervasive middle-class manly ideals help make sense of the hiring and promotion practices at all levels of packing management. Despite shifting public attitudes toward human rights in the wake of the Holocaust and women's claims to gender equality during World War Two, local packing management continued to hire and promote

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[146] Dummitt, *The Manly Modern*. 6.
[147] Dummitt, *The Manly Modern*. 7.
[148] Victor J. Seidler, *Rediscovering Masculinity*, Introduction.

strategically to ensure that front office and management positions, including foremen, remained the preserve of predominantly white, Anglo-Canadian men. The names and faces in company annual reports and on contracts throughout the era of national pattern bargaining reflect these practices. William, who was hired as a scaler in the livestock department of an Edmonton packinghouse during the 1940s with only a Grade 11 education, was eventually promoted into middle management in the main office and worked for the company for more than forty years. His English name and background – both parents immigrated in the early twentieth century – likely allowed him to work in the cleanest white-collar jobs in the packinghouse.[149] There is no evidence that management hired women into any management positions prior to World War Two, likely because of gendered assumptions about their lack of management ability.

Although a much greater number of women worked in production jobs after the war, interviews reveal that only a handful of women were promoted to forewoman over the years. Management also treated women in union leadership positions differently than men. Gloria Kereliuk, a female production worker who became active within the Swift union local, recalled in an interview that male managers were much harder on women union stewards than on male stewards, which made it particularly difficult for the women to resolve grievances: "a lot of times the women would be put down." As a result, women union stewards were often forced to ask male union leaders to accompany them to meetings with management, explaining to the men, "'Well, you come along, because we aren't getting the same kind of respect as we should be getting [from management].'"[150] Management used

[149] *William and *Elaine, Interview (Edmonton: 2004).
[150] Gloria Kereliuk, Telephone Interview I (Edmonton: 2006).

this differential treatment of women stewards to reinforce their social authority as middle-class men.

The local workforce continued to reflect the influence of management's patriarchal gender assumptions in other ways. Management's belief that women were necessarily and invariably physically weaker than men and were incapable of skillfully handling a knife or operating machinery confined them to a narrow range of jobs in the low-paid processing end of the operation. Women produced and packaged the cheaper meats like sausages, wieners, and bacon. Male managers assumed that women were more suited to the work in these departments because of dominant cultural notions that linked cleanliness and food production to female domesticity. Women were also assumed to be naturally faster and more dexterous with their hands than men. Former industrial relations manager at Canada Packers, Bob Joyce, commenting on his own work categorizing jobs as "light" or "heavy" in the 1950's when he was establishing a new job rating system with bracket increments, admitted in a 2008 interview that, "looking at it now it was fiction...it was really just the men being paid more than women for the same work. You wonder why I'd admit that now, but times are different."[151]

A gendered wage scale meant that even when women performed the same job as a man they usually earned less. The particular abilities women were assumed to have were not seen as skilled because, as Jane Gaskell has pointed out, "Women's skills have often been considered part of their femaleness, and therefore not to be counted."[152] Even during World

[151] Joyce, Interview.
[152] Jane Gaskell, "What Counts as Skill? Reflections on Pay Equity," in *Just Wages: A Feminist Assessment of Pay Equity*, ed. Judy Fudge and Patricia McDermott (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991). 142.

War Two when women entered many traditionally "male" jobs, management drew on the expertise of a range of professionals to reorganize and re-skill jobs in ways that embedded lower skill ratings, which made it much more difficult for women to pursue pay equity challenges then, and even today.[153]

Gendered notions about the meat itself also limited women's access to the higher paying jobs. Beef cattle, which are larger, heavier, and more costly than hogs, produce a coarser meat that is harder to cut but is more highly prized, as well as a more valuable hide. Significantly, beef has been associated with traits conventionally attributed to masculinity, such as strength, toughness, value, and even heterosexual virility. As Christopher Dummitt has pointed out, postwar advertisements that connected meat, particularly beef steak, with "virile heterosexual masculinity" to sell barbecues, strengthened this association with beef in ways that reinforced existing gender hierarchies.[154] In Edmonton packinghouses these notions meant that the only real knife job women had access to was meat trimming involving pork, but not beef.

These gendered cultural assumptions have been traced to the industrial revolution, which moved production from the household to the factory. In Britain, where industrialization first took root during the eighteenth century, male middle-class entrepreneurs gained legitimacy and status *vis a vis* working-class men from their ability to support children and a wife who did not work for wages outside the home. This gave rise to the middle-class ideal of the male family breadwinner and a definition of "workers" as exclusively male and "work" as labour performed for a wage in the public sphere. It also

[153] Stephen, *Pick One Intelligent Girl.*
[154] Christopher Dummitt, "Finding a Place for Father: Selling the Barbecue in Postwar Canada," *Journal of the CHA* 9(1998).

linked the domestic sphere, to which middle-class women became confined, to femininity more generally and helped make masculinity the antithesis of all things domestic.[155] The gendered pattern of industrialization in Canada was similar. In Edmonton packinghouses this resulted in gendered jobs and pay rates that subordinated women as workers in the plant and reinforced patriarchy. Throughout the entire period, even after equal pay was implemented in 1971, management set the rate of pay for jobs women typically performed at the three lowest rates in a system that included well over twenty job rates.[156]

In addition to maintaining a strict gender division of labour, Edmonton's packing workforce was distinctive for the low proportion of married packing women it employed during the 1950s, compared to the national average. According to Census data available at the municipal level only for 1951 and 1961, the proportion of married women in Edmonton packinghouses was a third of the industry rate nationally and significantly less than the rate for Alberta. Edmonton continued to lag ten years later, although less substantially.[157] This trend suggests that local managers were either more determined, or simply more successful

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[155] Parr, *Gender of Breadwinners*; Mary P. Ryan, *Cradle of the Middle Class: The Family in Oneida County, New York, 1790-1865* (Cambridge, Eng. ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981); Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780-1850* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987).These authors demonstrate that the ideology of separate spheres, which emerged with industrialization, profoundly altered fundamental concepts of femininity and masculinity throughout society in ways that were class-specific.

[156] According to a 1981 national survey of meatpacking workers women held less than five per cent of skilled and semi-skilled jobs such as Meat Boner (1.5%), All-Around Butcher (5%), Carcass Splitter (.7%), Meat Chopper (1%), Animal Skinner (.8%), and Meat Trimmer (3%). It is not possible to tell whether these figures represent a substantial increase because similar figures are not available for earlier years. Canada, *Wage Rates, Salaries, and Hours of Labour, 1947-1983.* Dennis Deslippe, ""Rights, Not Roses": Women, Industrial Unions, and the Law of Equality in the United States, 1945-80" (Ph.D., University of Iowa, 1994). 102-03.

[157] Between 1951 and 1961 the proportion of married production women in the Edmonton packing industry rose from eleven per cent to forty-four percent of packing women, but this was significantly lower than the rate for Canada, which was thirty-three per cent in 1951 and rose to fifty-six per cent in 1961. The Alberta rate rose from nineteen per cent to forty-six per cent. Canada. Dominion Bureau of Statistics., *Census*, 1961 : Recensement Du Canada. Labour Force. Main-D'oeuvre," ([Ottawa],1966); Canada. Dominion Bureau of Statistics, *Classification of Occupations, Ninth Census of Canada*, (Ottawa: E. Cloutier, 1951).

than management in other areas of the country in enforcing a marriage bar for women workers after the war. Either way they clearly embraced the patriarchal ideals of the manly modern.

Local management's assumptions about class and gender also intersected with notions of ethnicity and race to influence who was hired for production jobs and their opportunities for promotion in Edmonton packinghouses throughout the postwar decades. Production jobs were racialized in ways that reinforced an existing social hierarchy privileging Anglo-Canadian whiteness. During the early and mid twentieth century management preferred to hire East and South European men and women for the bulk of production work on the prairies because of a common racist practice – in part linked to the farming background of these European immigrants – of assuming that they were more "naturally" suited to heavy physical labour than Anglo-Canadians or Anglo immigrants, who were more often steered into higher paid jobs operating equipment or using a knife.[158]

Management and government officials also successfully excluded Asians from Edmonton packinghouses. In the final years of World War Two during a critical labour shortage in Edmonton packinghouses a local government official rejected the offer of Chinese workers from Vancouver specifically to fill meatpacking jobs.[159] During the same labour crisis, management in Edmonton packinghouses refused the government's offer of

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[158] In his study of Winnipeg meat packing workers' struggle to establish an independent union in the 1930's and 1940's, John Hanley Grover found that Ukrainians were the dominant European ethnic group, however there were also a lot of Czechs and Poles. Interviews revealed that these workers were given the "dirty" jobs because the company assumed that they were more suited to heavy physical labour. The few Anglo-Celtic Canadians employed in the plant typically worked in cleaner areas, such as the office, shipping, delivering and supervising. Grover, "Winnipeg Meat Packing Workers".

[159] Jennifer A. Stephen, "Deploying Discourses of Employability and Domesticity: Women's Employment and Training Policies and the Formation of the Canadian Welfare State, 1935-1947" (Ph.D., University of Toronto, 2000). 231-232.

several hundred interned Japanese men.[160] As a result, in Canada, unlike the United States, these relatively well-paid manufacturing jobs remained primarily the preserve of men and women who were seen as white.

Management used both formal and informal methods to restrict the number and status of black men in the plants. Fred, a skilled African-Canadian tradesman, explained that during World War Two his father, who looked white, was demoted without loss of pay from foreman to "gang leader" at one of Edmonton's packinghouses when the company hired the man's black-skinned father, unseen, and discovered the family's African heritage when the father showed up to work. Fred, who, like his grandfather, looked black, acknowledged that in his own post-World War Two era, "... they still had that [colour] line. We couldn't become management."[161]

Edmonton's economic boom, which created a severe shortage of skilled tradesmen, may have prevented management from excluding black men from the packinghouse entirely. In addition, racist practices in other Canadian industries, and government, as well as among packing managers, limited the job opportunities for men identified as people of colour. As a result, the handful of African-Canadian men who worked in Edmonton meatpacking plants for any length of time tended to work in the more difficult jobs, for example on the kill floor where they were often skilled workers handling the animal carcass, or in jobs that required a high level of skill, such as tradesmen in the maintenance department. A 1956-58 survey of Edmonton area engineers reveals that engineers in the meat packing plants made less than

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[160] Michael D. Stevenson, *Canada's Greatest Wartime Muddle: National Selective Service and the Mobilization of Human Resources During World War II* (Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001). 141.

[161] *Fred and *Mary, Interview (Edmonton: 2004). Horowitz, *Negro and White*. 24.

those in most other industries, which suggests that skilled blacks also could not afford to be selective.[162]

Similar practices in relation to Aboriginal peoples limited their numbers within the packing workforce, even though many Aboriginals left Alberta reserves for the city in the postwar decades.[163] In an interview, a former Edmonton foreman used derogatory stereotypes about the job instability of Aboriginal peoples to explain why so few worked in the plant. The retired foreman had an English father who gave him a respectable name, which outweighed any limitations his Ukrainian mother's heritage may have imposed, and helps explain his promotion to a management position soon after he was hired in the 1930s. When asked why so few Aboriginals worked at the plant, the man said, "They wouldn't stay," then immediately related an incident in which an Aboriginal man was fired for leaving the plant without a payment receipt for a large piece of wrapped bacon under his arm. The former foreman's mocking and derisive attitude toward the Aboriginal man suggests that these workers were viewed as backward and undisciplined for attitudes that may reveal important cultural differences, given the Aboriginal man's apparent forthrightness in carrying the meat so openly.[164]

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[162] Canada Packers Local 243, "Edmonton Area Engineers Wage Survey," (LAC, CFAW fonds, MG 28 I-186, PWOC and UPWA series, Vol 58, Wage Schedules Canada Packers, 1957-59).

[163] The number of Aboriginals (those identified as wholly or partly Indian, Metis, or Inuit) in Edmonton grew from 995 in 1961 to 4,260 in 1971. Jean Leonard Elliott, *Two Nations, Many Cultures: Ethnic Groups in Canada*, 2nd ed. (Scarborough, Ont.: Prentice-Hall Canada, 1983). By 1986 Aboriginals numbered 27,950 or five per cent of Edmonton's population. Most were concentrated in three areas of Edmonton, one of which was the packinghouses district. In these neighbourhoods the Aboriginal population was between six and eighteen per cent, which makes the relative absence of Aboriginal workers, according to interviews with non-Aboriginals, particularly striking. Jonathan Murphy, "Edmonton's Urban Natives: An Uphill Struggle for Survival," (Edmonton: Edmonton Social Planning Council, 1991). Despite numerous efforts I was unable to locate and interview an Aboriginal man or woman who worked in one of Edmonton's packinghouses during the study period.

[164]*George, Interview.

In interviews a number of workers described Edmonton's packing workforce as a "United Nations" because there were so many different ethnic groups in the plants following World War Two. The plants, however, remained predominantly white and the majority of workers were Canadian-born, although men and women of East and South European heritage exceeded those of Anglo-Celtic heritage among production workers throughout much of the national bargaining era. Approximately one-third of the local packing workforce was of Ukrainian heritage.[165] Nevertheless, Orest Kereliuk, a truck driver at Canada Packers, found that his Ukrainian heritage was a major obstacle to promotion in the 1960s. In an interview after his death, his wife, Gloria Kereliuk, explained that Canada Packers offered her husband a supervisory position in the trucking part of the operation if he agreed to Anglicize his name by changing it to Kerel. He refused to abbreviate his name and Kereliuk was never promoted from the job of truck driver, although he worked there many more years until retirement.[166] This evidence suggests that Edmonton's packing managers actively reinforced the class, gender, ethnic and racial hierarchies from which they continued to derive considerable social power in the postwar decades.

Interviews with former workers reveal that some local management figures held a proprietary attitude toward workers' bodies that was likely amplified by the perceived racial and ethnic divide between management and many production men.[167] George Kozak, whose

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[165] Canada. Dominion Bureau of Statistics, *Census*, 1961 : Recensement Du Canada. Labour Force. Main-D'oeuvre; Canada. Dominion Bureau of Statistics, *Census, Classification of Occupations, Ninth Census of Canada*, 1951; ———, *Census of the Prairie Provinces, 1946 = Recensement Des Provinces Des Prairies, 1946*, ([Ottawa: King's Printer, 1949).

[166] Gloria Kereliuk, Interview (Edmonton: 2006).

[167] I suggest that this attitude was more pronounced in relation to men because far more men than women were seen as non-white. In the 1936 census only thirty-four per cent of male Canners, Packers and Curers provincially were born in Canada, compared to seventy-four per cent of women in the same occupation category. Canada, Dominion Bureau of Statistics, *Census of the Prairie Provinces*, 1936, Table 7,

Romanian father started working at Edmonton's Swift plant when it first opened and got George a job during the Depression, recalled the humiliation of the hiring process: "Dave Cotton would come out, he was the personnel manager. He'd come out and feel your muscle and back and neck. He'd turn some away, those poor skinny guys flexing their muscles. They had no muscles, times were tough."[168] Those fortunate to land a job were subjected to intense supervision, even when they took washroom breaks: "Up in the washrooms there were no doors on the toilets. The foreman come up there, walk down to the end. When he come back you'd better be pulling up your pants. If not, you got down there and your slip was ready for you."[169] These anecdotes suggest that some local managers saw unskilled male workers in particular as little different from the animals they slaughtered. Given the new respect middle-class men accorded male muscle by the early twentieth century, the need to establish their social authority over well-muscled men performing heavy labour in the packinghouse may have intensified local management's need to assert class difference.

Packinghouses in Edmonton, like those across the rest of Canada, were racialized in ways that were quite different from the United States because there were fewer people of colour in the populace and the impact of slavery was more limited. Although blacks were only a tiny proportion of the local population, an anecdote related by former Burns worker Dolly L. reveals that at least some managers informally excluded black women from production jobs. Sometime in the 1960s or 70s Dolly overheard an assistant to the plant superintendent on the shop floor tell the superintendent that a black woman was waiting for

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Gainfully Occupied, 14 Years of Age and over, by Occupation, Conjugal Condition, and Sex; Tables 9 and 10, Gainfully Occupied, 14 Years of Age and over, by Occupation, Birthplace, Racial Origin and Sex.

[168] George Kozak, Interview Transcript (Edmonton: Alberta Labour History Institute/Ground Zero, 1998).

[169] *Ibid.*

him at the office to apply for a production job. According to Dolly, the superintendent told his assistant that the company "won't hire a coloured person because there's something under the skin in their hands that they can't have them working with meat."[170]

The small number of black women in the local labour force helps explain one important difference in the gender division of labour between Edmonton packinghouses and those in the Chicago area of the United States where a large pool of African-American labour was available. In Edmonton the filthy work of cleaning animal intestines was allocated to men, while in Chicago area packinghouses women performed this work, particularly African-American women, who filled a disproportionate number of these jobs. For example, in the 1920s African-American women comprised only 12.8 per cent of the packing workforce, but fifty per cent of those women worked in the casings and offal department where "you clean all the shit out" of animal intestines.[171] "Showcase" areas of the plant like the sliced bacon department usually employed young, white, American-born women.[172] According to interviews, Edmonton's Canada Packers plant hired men to clean the beef and pork casings and women graded them once they were cleaned.[173] Given the sometimes acute labour shortages Edmonton plants faced, particularly by the 1970s, which must have made it more tempting to hire women, it seems likely that these jobs were reserved for men because management considered the work unsuitable for Anglo-Celtic women or even for those of

[170] Dolly L., Interview (Edmonton: 2004).
[171] Fehn, "Striking Women". 153.
[172] Horowitz, *Negro and White*. 23.
[173] Goruk, Interview.

East and South European heritage who were increasingly seen as white in Edmonton by the 1960s. [174]

Manly modern ideals can be seen in the management strategies of senior executives at Canada Packers during the postwar decades, which often had unanticipated effects that hurt the firm. J.S. McLean's son, William Flavelle McLean, who took control of the company upon his father's death in 1954, saw himself as more of a scientist than a businessman, and his rationalist faith in professional expertise, particularly in science and technology, ultimately discredited him as an effective business manager. Bob Joyce, the man who headed up the company's industrial relations team during much of the era of national pattern bargaining, said in an interview many years later that Bill McLean was a "hell of a better researcher than a manager."[175] McLean developed a large and expensive research laboratory outside Toronto in which he took an active interest. Ironically, the CanPak system, which revolutionized the beef kill, was developed by a foreman in the company's Winnipeg plant who earned nothing more than his wage for an invention that the company patented and sold across the world.[176] The CanPak system was more innovative and lucrative than anything developed in the company's large and expensive research laboratory under William McLean's direction.

A provincial union leader in Alberta described Bill McLean as a "reluctant president" who hired a large and expensive staff to manage most of the company's industrial and human relations so that he could devote himself to scientific research. When Canada Packers was

[174] The one "coloured" woman mentioned in interviews worked in the egg grading plant in the 1950's, which paid significantly less than women's meatpacking jobs. Ellen B., Interview.
[175] Joyce, Interview.
[176] *Ibid.*

sold in 1990 the staff of roughly 300 in these two departments was reduced to about twenty people.[177] Yet the high value McLean placed on professional credentials, particularly education, seemed to leave at least some company executives – like Bob Joyce, who missed the opportunity for advanced schooling because of Depression and war – with a lingering sense of regret and inadequacy.[178]

Bill McLean was also faulted for reacting too emotionally when faced with challenging management situations. Former industrial relations director Bob Joyce said McLean "panicked" in crucial moments. Joyce felt McLean overreacted to the federal government investigation into two plant acquisitions by the company in 1955.[179] Instead of simply selling off the two small plants, one of which was of marginal value, according to Joyce, McLean struck a team of researchers who spent two years gathering evidence to defend the company at a tremendous cost. Although no substantive action was taken against the company, McLean was chastened by the government's knuckle-rapping, and chose to continue growing the company by expanding outside the country, with little success. As Joyce explained, revealing his own ambivalence much later in life about the modernist project of constant industrial expansion: "I don't know why you have to expand all the time – but anyway we do – instead of just paying dividends." Joyce said McLean panicked again in 1974 when Alberta farmers, angered by the Big Three packers' joint lockout in the province,

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[177] Norm Leclaire, Interview Transcript (Lethbridge: by Ian MacLachlan, 1995). Maclachlan. 193.
[178] Joyce, Interview.
[179] The investigation was triggered by the federal government's own regulatory process in 1958, which likely reflected a new political climate in Canada following Progressive Conservative John Diefenbaker's landslide electoral win. The public had rejected Liberal arrogance over government support for corporate ventures like the Trans-Canada Pipeline project. Canada Packers' Industrial Relations manager at the time, Bob Joyce, considered the merger insignificant in terms of its effect on Canada Packers' monopoly status because the two companies were worth "peanuts." Margaret Conrad and Alvin Finkel, *Canada: A National History* (Toronto: Longman, 2003). 443; Joyce, Interview.

set live hogs loose at the Alberta legislature in Edmonton to prod the provincial government into action. "Hog shit everywhere, it wasn't a pretty sight," Joyce chuckled in an interview. According to Joyce, Alberta Premier Peter Lougheed "went berserk" and told the company CEOs "you settle it now or I'll settle it for you." McLean turned to Joyce, who had been holding fast in negotiations, and ordered him to settle, which broke the lockout because Canada Packers, once again, had taken the lead. As a result, Joyce believed workers received a more generous settlement.[180]

Glimpses of the management culture at Canada Packers' head office in Toronto revealed in interviews and documentary sources suggest that emotional restraint was valued as the key to rational decisions. Emotional restraint was a central pillar of the postwar manly modern ideal in Canada. It was a quality constructed predominantly by middle-class Anglo-Canadian men in relation to men of other classes, ethnicities, and cultures, and particularly in relation to women, who were seen as most lacking emotional control. Bill McLean's tendency to panic has been linked by some to the idea that McLean was more like his mother, who was described as "honest and good," than his father, who was seen as "a tough old bird." These characterizations adhere to dominant notions of women as inherently more emotional, even hysterical, than men, and pious, which helped legitimize men's exclusive access to the more materially-oriented public sphere.[181] It is clear that men who did not adhere to this repressive ideal of middle-class masculinity paid a high price.

David Collinson and Jeff Hearn have argued that the hegemonic masculinity that emerges in a particular workplace is contingent on a number of factors, including the

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[180] ———, Interview.
[181] Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*.

structure of the business.[182] In the postwar era Canada Packers' dominance of the meatpacking industry seems to have intensified the strong sense of responsibility Bill McLean felt as company president because of his family culture and his own personality. The company's remarkable success while in his father's tight grasp weighed heavily on Bill McLean, who once told an interviewer, "We were brought up in a successful company, and you know whose fault it will be if we fail."[183] The company's stature within the industry also gave its white-collar masculine management culture considerable influence. McLean's feeling that he had big shoes to fill reveals the enduring influence of early twentieth century ideas about respectable middle-class masculinity in Canada. Evidence that McLean had a puritanical streak, likely stemming from the Methodist influence of his father and his father's mentor, Joseph Flavelle, reinforces this impression.[184] It appeared to burden McLean with a strict moral code that made him sensitive to criticism. Described as a "strong-minded, authoritarian manager with a traditional set of values," Bill McLean would take "no back talk" and required that office staff wear suit jackets "at all times."[185] In the 1960s the company required that its truck drivers wear white dress shirts and black bow ties.[186]

The influence of manly modern ideals was also evident in the celebration of bureaucratic rationalism by top executives at all three packing companies. The publicly traded Burns and Company became weighed down by a large and inefficient management

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[182] Hearn, "Men and Masculinities."
[183] Joyce, Interview.
[184] Some called Flavelle "Holy Joe" because of his religious convictions and practices. Bliss, *A Canadian Millionaire*. 92.
[185] Athanassakos and Harling, "Canada Packers." 92. Joy Parr has demonstrated that during the interwar years industry journals encouraged Canadian managers to use white-collar dress to distance themselves from production men, deepening the class divide. Parr, *Gender of Breadwinners*. 153-57.
[186] Edmonton truck drivers grieved this requirement -- most packing plants only required that drivers wear the less professional-looking white "lugger" coats on the job."Re: Clothing," (LAC, CFAW fonds, MG 28 I-186, PWOC and UPWA series, Vol 21, Canada Packers Grievances).

hierarchy after an aging Pat Burns sold the business in 1928. In 1964 the moribund company with its head office in Calgary, changed hands and was renamed Burns Foods. Two years later Burns achieved a dramatic financial turnaround under the unyielding leadership of A.J.E. Child, in large part by capitalizing on Canada Packers' loss of market share during its 1966 strike.[187] Child, a former Canada Packers vice-president of finance who learned the business under the tutelage of J.S. McLean, developed a hard-driving and exacting management style aimed at creating efficiencies. As one former meatpacking executive said of Child, "If he had a god it was J.S. McLean." An ambitious man, Child left Canada Packers when he realized he could never become president. At Burns Child imposed the same kind of authoritarianism and rigid formality found at Canada Packers, but with a stronger focus on cost-cutting efficiencies. No one in the company called him by his first name. One former top executive recalled traveling across the country on a private jet with the presidents and other top executives of Canada's Big Three packing companies because of a labour dispute and marveling that he was addressing the Swift president by his first name, "Art," but his own boss, Arthur J.E. Child was still "Mr. Child" to him.

Bureaucracy, a key feature of the modern corporation in mid-twentieth century Canada, was particularly pronounced at Swift Canadian in the postwar decades. As an American-owned company, Swift Canadian had to filter decisions through the Canadian head office in Toronto and used its extra layer of bureaucracy in Chicago, where final decisions were made, to obfuscate its financial situation and management agenda.[188] The company tended to stand apart from the other two Canadian majors in large part because its business

[187] MacLachlan, *Kill and Chill*. 198-99.
[188] "Report on Swift Negotiations in Canada," (WHS, UPWA, M2002-044 Box 36A).

culture conformed to the more aggressively individualistic and anti-union American business culture. Even within the system of pattern bargaining, when negotiations went to conciliation twice in the 1950s Swift Canadian refused to cooperate with Canada Packers and Burns in working out a conciliation procedure within the complexities of a national industry that operated in eight different provinces, each with its own unique conciliation procedure. Swift worked out its own agreement with the union, an agreement that each time ended up essentially the same as the one agreed to by the other companies.[189] The former executive of a Canadian meatpacking firm described Swift senior management in Canada as a very "business-like" and "tough bunch of guys" whom the U.S. "tightly controlled." By the mid-twentieth century Swift was the largest meat packer internationally (although not in Canada).[190] According to Neil Reimer, who was a major figure in Alberta's labour movement and in provincial politics during the postwar era, "They always thought of themselves as the big boy... they played their own game."[191]

The highly rational incentive system that each company embraced demonstrated management's faith in reason and control as vehicles for cutting labour costs to increase profits. In the postwar decades each company carefully refined a bonus system that had been put in place during the 1930s. The exigencies of a high-volume industry that relied on a large workforce of predominantly unskilled workers made increased control over the pace of work an article of faith for all packing managers, and scientific management the tool of preference. Both Burns and Swift adopted the American Bedeaux system of bonuses that workers earned

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[189] Alton W. J. Craig, "The Consequences of Provincial Jurisdiction for the Process of Companywide Collective Bargaining in Canada: A Study of the Packing House Industry" (Ph.D., Cornell University, 1964).

[190] It held this status in 1967 and was the thirteenth-largest company in the United States. MacLachlan, *Kill and Chill*. 195.

[191] Neil Reimer, Interview Transcript (Edmonton: Alberta Labour History Institute/Ground Zero, 2004).

if they exceeded the "standard hours" set for a particular job based on time studies conducted by costing engineers and efficiency experts. Every plant operation was rated this way. Vince Westacott, a young office clerk at Swift's Edmonton plant in 1947 who was put on "time study" work, displayed some ambivalence when explaining in an interview with me many years later the rationale that was used to implement the system. It was his job to calculate on a daily basis the output of each department:

> ...some of the fellows would feel they worked harder than what we gave them a percentage for. They would get extra money if they worked harder. Each gang – like the boners, the packers – each small group would be separate and get extra money and this would be posted in their department on a daily basis name by name. It was good for the company and it was good for the employees. Mostly, possibly, the company.[192]

Yet, according to former Burns vice president William Goetz, this system did not work well at Burns because the company did not keep its productivity standards up to date. Workers earned remarkable bonuses at Burns until the system was eliminated in the late 1960s under A.J.E. Child. Canada Packers used a different bonus system. Instead of the standard hours system, it created a "best plant" system that fostered competition between plants, and between departments within each plant to encourage workers to work harder. Under this system plants and departments competed against each other rather than against a universal standard established by timing the number of worker hours it took to process each

[192] Vince Westacott and Mary Westacott, Interview (Edmonton: 2004).

head of livestock. The plant system brought Canada Packers high productivity and profits, and Child adopted it at Burns in the late 1960s.[193]

4.3 Local Cooperation

All three packing companies strove to increase management control using highly rational and bureaucratic strategies that drew on professional expertise, but this overarching goal was compromised by a number of unexpected results. At the local level the complex system governing labour relations triggered a surprising degree of cooperation between management and workers at the Canada Packers and Burns plants, which began to affect the companies' bottom line.[194] For example, local management's attitude toward workers became more conciliatory at the Canada Packers plant between the late 1940s and the early 1950s. In 1949 the union's Alberta staff representative, Jack Hampson, reported that the local superintendent Jim Long took "a very stiff attitude" when challenged by members of the union's grievance committee, saying, "If they don't like it, they know what they can do about it."[195] A year later Alex Goruk, president of the Canada Packers union local, reported to Hampson that Long tried to "intimidate" him for sharing information about the plant with the union's national office.[196] By 1951, however, the union rep reported a "change of attitude for Canada Packers locally" that had made the superintendent more accommodating about union requests for job rate increases.[197] This impression was confirmed in an interview with the company's industrial relations manager, Bob Joyce, who described the local

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[193] Goetz, Interview Transcript. Courtesy of Ian MacLachlan

[194] More than one worker used the term "harmonious relations" to describe labour relations under national pattern bargaining despite a series of labour disputes that developed in the 1960s and 1970s, in part because during those years the companies did not try to operate during a dispute.

[195] Hampson, "Alberta Staff Reports, Locals 233-422." Local 243, 17 February 1949.

[196] *Ibid.* Local 243, 5 July 1950

[197] ———, "Alberta Staff Reports, Locals 233-511." Local 243, 7 June 1951.

superintendent as "kind of friendly with the union a good part of the time." Yet Joyce also said the local superintendent was "a very loud, tough, tough guy on his staff ... he made foremen cry in front of the union men, blasted them day after day."[198]

To interpret the superintendent's behaviour I have drawn on the work of Mona Gleason and Mary Louise Adams, who have examined the growing public concern in the 1950s about men whose middle-management jobs required them to be "tuned to the needs of others."[199] This concern was a reaction to the growing number of women in the paid workforce by the 1950s who were performing an increasing number of jobs previously thought to be the preserve of men. Middle-class men most often responded by investing in other social hierarchies, like those of class, race, and gender.[200] In this case I am suggesting that the superintendent appeared to vent his job frustrations on lower level management figures like foremen who were an easy target compared to unionized workers.

Notions of gender, and to some extent race and ethnicity, helped facilitate local cooperation between management and the union because the union leadership was almost exclusively male and predominantly seen as white during the era of national pattern bargaining. A work stoppage at Canada Packers in 1952 reveals that plant superintendent Jim Long had been achieving a level of concessions from local union leaders on grievances, particularly overtime, that was unacceptable to the general membership. Long's reaction to the work stoppage suggests that he assumed a greater degree of management prerogative than the new labour relations system allowed in practice. He bypassed the union leadership and

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[198] Bob Joyce, Interview (Mississauga: 2008).
[199] Mary Louise Adams, *The Trouble with Normal: Postwar Youth and the Making of Heterosexuality* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997). 33-34.
[200] Mona Lee Gleason, *Normalizing the Ideal: Psychology, Schooling, and the Family in Postwar Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999).

called a meeting on the shop floor to order workers to perform overtime on the coming Saturday. When the Chief Steward, who arrived in haste at the conclusion of the meeting, tried to speak, Long said, "I am still the Supt. in this plant and this was my meeting."[201] The chief steward challenged Long's right to silence him and persisted in giving the union leadership's assessment of the situation. Most tellingly, only five unionized workers showed up for the overtime work. Although the outcome of this incident is not clear, the detailed account provided by local union officials to their national office suggests that this work disruption forced local management to concede more respect for the will of the local members, which, as we will see in Chapter Seven, marked a new phase in local labour relations.

Confronted with the problems of local cooperation and unprecedented labour costs under the system of centralized bargaining, national packing executives turned for solutions to the familiar manly modern ideals of rational control, technology, and professionalism. At Canada Packers, head office appointed new university-educated personnel to key management positions in Edmonton and reduced their local autonomy in what appeared to have been a deliberate attempt to disrupt a pattern of strategic "understandings" that had developed between local union leaders and managers. The local union president noted in 1970, "it is obvious that local management no longer has the authority or the ability to make decisions on anything which involves the master agreement."[202]

By the 1960s and especially the 70s the other head offices were hiring mainly university graduates with no packinghouse experience into management positions, which

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[201] Local 243 Executive, "Grievance Re: Overtime Refusal by Workers," (Edmonton: LAC, CFAW fonds, MG 28 I-186, PWOC and UPWA series, Vol 20, Canada Packers Grievances, 1952).
[202] Alex Goruk, 12 December 1970.

reduced the common ground between local management and union leaders. Although a well-liked local foreman at Swift was able to become the national industrial relations director for Swift Canadian in the 1960s, the nostalgia with which one worker recalled this man's rise through the ranks of management in an interview thirty years later suggests that Swift also embraced the trend toward credentialism.[203] Burns developed a highly centralized management style specifically to curb "side deals" made by local managers. As William Goetz, former vice president of industrial relations for Burns explained in a 2008 interview:

> We ran our company very centrally, very centrally.... Particularly when it came to labour relations. We had some pretty hairy experiences where local management deviated from the contract and actually made concessions that had been rejected at the bargaining table and tried cleaning up some of those messes. It gets to be pretty grubby work. So [on] the labour relations end we kept very very close control.[204]

Goetz instituted a policy of not paying for any arbitrations pursued by local management that head office did not support. "Our plant could only proceed with it on the basis that they understood the company position, that they wouldn't concede anything, and that we would pay – head office – would directly pay the cost of the arbitration, which of course could get pretty expensive."[205]

After the war most managers at the local and national level had little more than a high school education and many had worked their way up through the plant. Tommy Dane, who rose from foreman of the malodorous Pickle Cellar at Edmonton's Swift plant to become

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[203] Kozak, Interview Transcript.
[204] William Goetz explained that it was difficult to hire university graduates into low-level management positions because the shop floor environment was so unappealing. To get around this he would often hire them into a personnel position first. Goetz, Telephone Interview.
[205] *Ibid.*

national Industrial Relations Director for Swift Canadian by 1964, was exceptionally well-liked by workers and other managers alike.[206] In an interview former Swift worker George Kozak spoke fondly of the time when Dane was superintendent and often "visited" with workers in the plant: "He'd come talk to me as if we were old buddies."

Swift Canadian's head office generated new tensions between white-collar and union men in local packinghouses by de-linking the salary increases of local management figures from union raises, a decision that seemed unreasonable to local white-collar workers. William began working as a clerk in a local packinghouse during World War Two at the age of sixteen, and rose into middle management during a lifetime of work in the firm. In an interview William explained with some bitterness that initially salaried workers were given the same increase as unionized workers, "but after several years the union said the salaried people are not fighting for their increase in pay where we are so why are you automatically giving salaried people a raise? They discontinued that and you only got a raise on your merit." Asked how salaried workers felt about this change Williams responded, "Terrible, yeah, well, you know, our grocery bills and utility bills went up the same as the union."[207]

Nevertheless, in response to the growing income gap between himself and unionized workers, William drew on the manly modern ideals of rational efficiency and self control to depict himself as more frugal and responsible than union men. William said he felt that unionized workers earned too much: "It took me forty-three years to earn $500 a month. Some workers started at that wage."[208] He followed this comment by emphasizing the ability

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[206] Craig, "The Consequences of Provincial Jurisdiction". 82

[207] *William and *Elaine, Interview.

[208] *Ibid.* This packinghouse office worker's attitude is similar to the attitude of unionized male white-collar workers at B.C. Hydro who, during the same period, ranked supervisory, mental, and manual labour in descending order of importance and argued that they should be paid at least as much or more than male

of he and his wife to achieve a satisfying lifestyle while raising their two children by carefully managing their modest single-family income – for example, he biked to work in all seasons for many years. This implied that unionized workers who pressed for higher wages than office workers must have been profligate.[209] With considerable passion he also disparaged unionized workers as unreasonable and intimidating because they "pressured" summer students to pay union dues – among them his own two sons at one time. "I always felt sorry for young lads who were, you know, trying to make a little money during the summer and they insisted on taking union dues – that was from the very first week, from the very first week!"[210]

I could see the effects of tight head office control, particularly at Canada Packers and Swift Canadian, in the way former Edmonton managers responded to the interview process. One former Canada Packers foreman expressed concern about the interview compromising his pension if company officials heard it -- even though the company no longer exists. A former Swift foreman asked that the recording device be turned off at one point, and was one of the few people interviewed who chose anonymity. A former low level Swift manager also requested anonymity and refused further involvement in the research after a first interview. Some foremen, by contrast, displayed a strong independent spirit that also seemed like a reaction to the experience of tight upper management control. Former Swift manager Vince

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blue-collar workers because they regarded themselves "as highly skilled and worth higher wages than their blue-collar counterparts." The male-dominated union's complicity in defining women's clerical work as low-skilled, and its decision to make male breadwinner rights a higher priority than equal pay for women helped undermine its claim that men's office work was highly skilled. Gillian Creese, "Normalizing Breadwinner Rights," in *Contracting Masculinity: Gender, Class, and Race in a White-Collar Union, 1944-1994* (Don Mills, Ont: Oxford University Press Canada, 1999). 78-83

[209] William's wife did not work for wages throughout most of the years that the couple was raising their family.

[210] *William and *Elaine, Interview.

Westacott, who started working at the plant right after the war, was exceptional among local packing managers in taking pride in his ability to stand up to company executives, particularly after the company was bought by the arrogant and imperious Peter Pocklington in 1980.[211] During an interview Westacott said, "I got along fine with Pocklington" and then related a telephone conversation that he had with Pocklington, who asked him "to do something that was illegal and, anyway, I asked him if he'd go to jail for me, and he hung up." Laughing as he related the anecdote, Westacott taunted his former boss by speaking directly to the tape-recorder, saying "Pocklington can listen to this."[212]

Vince Westacott also saw himself as an exceptional mid-level manager because of his rapport with workers, which he cultivated by breaking with management's policy of maintaining social distance from production people. The affable Westacott, who said he "got along with everyone," would don a white packing coat and, to the amazement of his white-collar co-workers, sit down with production men in their gore-spattered uniforms for lunch on occasion because "it was the best way to know what was going on."[213] Most tellingly, he was made an honorary member of the union and more than one union leader insisted that I include an interview with Westacott for this research, presumably because production workers respected his understanding of their position in the local industry.

4.4 *Labour Turmoil*

Management's reliance on manly modern principles to achieve greater control over workers helped trigger a series of labour disputes in the 1960s and 70s after nearly twenty

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[211] Bob Gilmour, "Pocklington Empire Grows: City Firm Purchases Swift's," *Edmonton Journal*, 24 October 1980.
[212] Westacott and Westacott, Interview.
[213] *Ibid.*

years of relative labour peace.[214] When the union struck Canada Packers in 1966 a key issue was a "deterioration" in labour relations "because of the strict enforcement of the rules under a new group of industrial relations executives."[215] The company responded in ways that revealed management's persistent faith in national bargaining as a vehicle of rational control. The company seemed to assume that it was largely invulnerable because of its market dominance within this system of bargaining, which made it the industry trend-setter most of the time.

Although Canada Packers operated independently of its partners in the system of pattern bargaining, during the strike the company made no attempt to operate any of its packinghouses with strike breakers. **[Figure 9]** This strategy was quite different from that of most companies embroiled in the wave of labour militancy that erupted at the time.[216] The company did not appear to see the nation-wide shutdown as an urgent crisis because talks broke off at the outset of the strike and did not resume until nearly a month later. By the time a deal was reached after ten weeks, competitors had seriously eroded Canada Packers' market share, particularly Burns. The company ended up agreeing to a wage gain that was close to the union's original demand, which the union was able to leverage using a recent federal government wage decision. In a 2008 interview, Bob Joyce, who was heavily involved in negotiations as an industrial relations executive for Canada Packers at the time, said "the real issue" that decided it was the timing of a large wage increase the government granted St.

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[214] The union and the companies went to conciliation twice during the 1950s. Craig, "The Consequences of Provincial Jurisdiction".
[215] "Settlement Reached in Nation-Wide Strike at Canada Packers," *Globe and Mail*, 23 September.
[216] Some strikes resulted in vandalism of company property, the use of guns, and physical and verbal assaults on union leaders. See McInnis, "Hothead Troubles: 1960s-Era Wildcat Strikes in Canada." Ian Milligan, ""The Cry of Youth: Class, Radicalism, and the Challenging of the Golden Age," in *Canadian Historical Association Annual Conference* (Fredericton: Congress of the Humanities and Sciences, 2011).

Lawrence Seaway workers.[217] The company settled because the strike had become financially devastating.

Viewing the 1966 strike through a gendered lens also provides insight into why the new breed packinghouses were brought under the master contract in Canada, but not in the United States. In Canada the fact that the first new breed packinghouses were built by the meatpacking majors, particularly Canada Packers, made it easier for the packing union to bring these plants under the master contracts. This helped prolong the national system of pattern bargaining fifteen years longer than in the United States. In comparison, in the United States IBP was able to defeat the union rate in a decisive 1969 strike at a mid-western "new breed" packinghouse.

Anthropologist Debra Fink has demonstrated that management's notions of gender difference were central to IBP's success. The American company was able to avoid union wages using arguments about "gender difference" that capitalized on dominant patriarchal assumptions. When pressed to adopt union wage rates in the 1960s, IBP claimed it could not compete with large established American companies like Armour, Swift, Wilson, and Cudahy because the new packinghouses did not have the processing departments of old style plants where a predominance of lower-paid female workers had long subsidized the higher wages of male workers who did the slaughtering work. Yet, as Fink has pointed out, after initially hiring only men in its slaughter plants, by the late 1960s IBP was violating contemporary gender norms by "aggressively" recruiting mainly white rural women into

[217] Joyce, Interview.

meat-cutting positions – something that the established packing companies had done only during war time.[218]

In a 1976 masters thesis on IBP's success, former management employee Ronald Miller explained that hiring women provided crucial support for the company's argument that the work was unskilled: "Iowa Beef claims that if [women] can do parts of jobs, which in their former skilled forms were physically too demanding for women and took years to learn, they should not have to pay the Amalgamated skilled rate."[219] According to Miller, employing women in plants that only slaughtered beef was one important factor in IBP's success. As he explained it, IBP was "the experiment of two men who have not been blinded by past traditional concepts of meat packing."[220] The company's use of women workers, who were assumed to be unskilled, bolstered its claim that the new plants were quite different from the old diversified plants because they used new processes with less skilled workers. During the crucial 1969 strike IBP management argued that a woman worker "shouldn't be paid the same as a butcher who spent years learning his trade. Frankly, she's not worth it."[221] Debra Fink emphasized that the union's acceptance of gendered wage rates and jobs throughout most of the period following World War Two undermined its own protests because most workers agreed: "A woman could not do a real (male) job; if a woman could do it, it was not the same job that a man had done."[222] IBP's ability to win the 1969 strike

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[218] By the mid-1970's the company began employing women on the kill floor. In the mid-twentieth century the majority of women in rural mid-western American communities where the new plants located were seen as white. Fink, *Cutting into the Meatpacking Line*. 93, 107.
[219] Ronald E. Miller, "An Analysis of the Wage System at Iowa Beef Processors, Inc." (M.A., University of Iowa, 1976). 46.
[220] *Ibid.*
[221] Jerry Knight, "Long Iowa Beef Strike Seen," *Des Moines Register*, 26 October 1969.
[222] Fink, *Cutting into the Meatpacking Line*. 94.

cracked the national system of pattern bargaining in the U.S. The savings from lower wages were key to its ability to undercut America's Big Four packing companies.

A key difference in the Canadian context was the complete absence of women in the new breed packinghouses. According to those close to negotiations on both sides of the 1966 strike, Canada Packers used the same argument as IBP -- that workers in the new plants were less skilled because of the new equipment and processes used at the Lethbridge packinghouse -- but its argument was weakened by the fact that only men worked in the new packinghouses and male workers were more easily associated with skill.[223] One factor in the outcome of the 1966 strike was Canada's less competitive business environment, which allowed Canada Packers to easily dominate the meatpacking industry, making higher wage rates more affordable.[224] Canada Packers' beef slaughter plants were also initially a small part of a much larger national operation that was already unionized, which made the issue of union wages less critical than for IBP, where a decision affected all its employees.[225]

Comparing these very different wage outcomes helps spotlight the way notions of gender difference weakened management's arguments about skill in Canada Packers' new breed plants. The smaller scale of the new Canadian beef slaughter plants may have made female labour less necessary, although that is debatable because of the severe labour shortage

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[223] Former executives of Burns and Canada Packers, as well as a former union representative confirmed that no women worked in the new breed packinghouses until the late 1980s. Norm Leclaire, Telephone Interview (Lethbridge: 2008). Goetz, Telephone Interview. Regional gender differences in the packing workforce reflected the growing presence of male-only new-breed beef slaughterhouses on the prairies. The number of packing women in Alberta declined from twenty-one per cent in 1948 to eleven per cent in 1971, while in Ontario it rose during the same period from seventeen per cent to twenty per cent as more of the processing work typically performed by women shifted from Alberta to Ontario. Statistics Canada, *The Slaughtering and Meat Packing Industry and the Sausage and Casings Industry,* 1949-79.

[224] According to Bob Joyce, who negotiated for Canada Packers in the 1966 strike, whether or not the Lethbridge plant was brought under the master contract was important, but it was not a critical issue financially from the company's perspective. Joyce, Interview.

[225] *Ibid.*

Alberta faced, particularly in the 1970s during the oil boom.[226] It is more likely that the manly modern ideals embedded in Canada Packers' corporate culture under the leadership of president Bill McLean made hiring women in a plant that slaughtered only beef inconceivable. McLean was known for his "unwillingness to pursue profits if that meant doing anything he viewed as unethical or immoral."[227] An understanding of prevailing notions of middle-class masculinity provides a more compelling explanation for why Canada Packers hired no women in its beef slaughter plants until nearly fifteen years later than IBP, and how this weakened its effort to resist union wages in the new breed packinghouses.[228]

The manly modern impulse for control also shaped the strategies of senior packing executives in the 1970s, when they were reeling from rising labour costs, the pressures of intense American competition, and a national economic recession aggravated by higher energy costs. Canada Packers, which had far more influence in the industry than any other company, had inadvertently produced national wage rates that did not make economic sense in a country with wide regional variations. Even Bob Joyce, who headed up the team of professional negotiators for Canada Packers, acknowledged in a 2008 interview that over time "the total package" created "wacky" wage rates in places like Charlottetown, where women packing workers were highly sought-after marriage partners because of their extraordinary wages in a weak local economy.[229]

In the 1970s the top strategists in all three packing companies were grasping for greater

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[226] Former UFCW staff representative Norm Leclaire estimated that the Lethbridge plant was one tenth the size of similar plants in the American mid-west. Leclaire, Telephone Interview.
[227] Athanassakos and Harling, "Canada Packers." 92.
[228] Author telephone conversation with Norm Leclaire, 7 March 2008. Goetz, Telephone Interview; Joyce, Interview.
[229] _____, Interview. Former UFCW research director Bill Reno also noted this in a conversation 28 August 2003.

control, particularly over bargaining. Before the joint 1974 lockout Swift had unexpectedly taken the lead in national negotiations, likely to rein in wage increases, but it was a move that antagonized Canada Packers. In 1978 Canada Packers "did an end run" around a strike deadlock that developed between the union and Swift, which had been targeted initially by the union that year, and Canada Packers ended up negotiating the key settlement that set the industry pattern.[230] Another year Swift took the bargaining initiative and struck a deal surreptitiously, which made Canada Packers management livid. In 1982, as the key company, Canada Packers negotiated a wage deal that was so high the senior executive of one Canadian packing firm called it "predatory," explaining that at the time "the word on the street" was that Canada Packers wanted to drive other companies out of the industry.[231] The intense rivalry and growing sense of unfairness among national executives at first Swift and then Burns helped trigger the collapse of centralized bargaining.

These high-level tensions affected labour relations in local packinghouses during the late 1960s and the 1970s in ways that throw into sharp relief the dominance of manly modern values. When Canada Packers' straitened financial condition following the 1966 strike put more head office pressure on local management to curb costs, the superintendent at Edmonton's Canada Packers plant abandoned white-collar rationalism, objectivity and emotional restraint in his effort to reduce union grievances. Local union president Alex Goruk complained to the union's national research director about a dramatic change he perceived in the behaviour of the plant superintendent, who Goruk said had "lost his temper"

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[230] List, "Canada Packers Gets Agreement; Terms Go to Swift." Bob Joyce had left Canada Packers for undisclosed reasons by this point, which seems to be an indication of troubled internal management relations.

[231] Goetz, Interview Transcript.

in recent grievance meetings. The superintendent was accused of taking "a very aggravating position, often not even giving us an opportunity to explain out [sic] case before flying off." When Goruk asked for clarification on a particular issue the man, "flew into a vicious rage and shouted at the top of his voice and finally told us (Harvey and me) that 'this meeting is over.'"[232]

In an interview, a former senior executive of Canada Packers, who was Anglo-Canadian, drew on manly modern assumptions about white Anglo-Canadian masculine superiority and professionalism to explain this incident. The executive emphasized how much he liked the Edmonton superintendent and felt he was "pretty good" as a manager, yet faulted him for losing his temper like a "good Italian." He also felt the man was "in over his head" because he lacked management skills. This explanation of the superintendent's angry outbursts reinforces an image of male Anglo-Canadian reserve in comparison to men of "other" ethnicities in Canadian society at a time when the middle-class manly ideals of emotional restraint, professionalism, and control were highly valued.

The ability of local managers to uphold management ideals was also compromised by the dramatic economic boom in Alberta in the 1970s, which flew in the face of a deepening recession throughout the rest of the country. It pushed the labour turnover rate to a dizzying pace, even though Edmonton's meatpacking industry grew and restructured at a rate similar to other cities.[233] Bob Joyce, who was national director of labour relations for Canada

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[232] Harvey Shaw was the union's Chief Steward at Canada Packers in Edmonton. Alex Goruk, "Re: Superintendent," (LAC, CFAW fonds, MG 28 I-186, accession 1984-0536, Box 11, 1967).

[233] Edmonton's meatpacking industry appears to have kept pace with but did not exceed the national average. The value of factory shipments increased 100% nationally between 1971 and 1977, for example, and in Edmonton they increased ninety-two percent, although Edmonton numbers are more similar than they appear because, unlike the national figures, they include the poultry industry, which typically is five percent of the total figures. Statistics Canada, *The Slaughtering and Meat Packing Industry and the*

Packers at the time, recalled how difficult it was to staff Edmonton packinghouses during the 1970s: "That was brutal. You couldn't hire anybody. The poor old foremen and superintendents just going nuts trying to keep the plant running."[234] The labour shortage was aggravated by Edmonton's compressed rate of urbanization compared to other regions of Canada. Local management was constantly fielding requests from workers for an unpaid leave to do the spring planting or fall harvest because many workers operated their own farm or helped out on the family farm.[235]

Changes in labour and immigration law also put more pressure on local managers. Women workers achieved equal pay and benefits in the early 1970s, which triggered friction on the shop floor as some male workers began refusing to assist women workers with heavy lifting.[236] Local management faced more tensions arising from the growing ethnic and racial diversity of production workers. A new immigration law passed in 1967 allowed more people seen as non-white to enter the country, and a significant number moved to Edmonton because of the booming economy, often ending up in local packinghouses, particularly those who were refugees. Some older packing workers who saw themselves as "white" felt resentful toward these new workers who often had lower standard-of-living expectations.

Union minutes for the Swift plant during these years reveal that many foremen drew on modern middle-class manly ideals of emotional self-restraint, order, and rational precision to bolster their authority. Warnings, suspensions, and in one case dismissal, for using abusive language to a foreman, "talking back" or "threatening" him, demonstrated that

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Sausage and Casings Industry, 1949-79; ———, *Manufacturing Industries of Canada National and Provincial Areas,* 1972-1980.

[234] Joyce, Interview.

[235] Charlie Bonello, Interview (Toronto: 2004).

[236] Deslippe, "Rights Not Roses".

management expected workers to retain emotional control, particularly control of their anger. There is also evidence that management became more exacting with workers because the number of petty disciplinary actions increased. In one case a foreman suspended a worker for not telling him he was leaving for a doctor's appointment, even though he had told the foreman earlier that he would be leaving.[237]

A failed attempt by senior executives in the Canadian packing industry to combine against American competition in the mid-1970s reveals the ongoing drive for control among these men. In an interview, former Burns vice president William Goetz said A.J.E. Child, who was president of Burns at the time, called a meeting of representatives from Burns, Lakeside Packers (which was independently owned at the time) and Dvorkin Meat Packer, among others (although Canada Packers executives were not involved). According to Goetz,

> What he wanted to do was start up a Canadian equivalent of IBP, and it was to be done by all the companies that were in the room, and each would put up its share -- put up *a* share, depending on what they wanted to do -- and build this plant. But it just broke apart -- they said they weren't interested... Well, we got a little competitive: 'I want to own more shares, I want to control it' -- you know, that sort of thing.[238]

The initiative failed, Goetz said, because each of them became too "competitive." As Gail Bederman, Anthony Rotundo, Michael Kimmel and others have noted in the American context, competitive individualism is a hallmark of modern middle-class masculinity.[239]

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[237] Swift Local 280, "GMM Minutes," (Edmonton: UFCW Local 1118, 1967-1979). November, 1967, 1 April 1969, 6 October 1970, 13 December 1977.
[238] Goetz, Telephone Interview.
[239] Rotundo, *American Manhood*; Bederman, *Manliness & Civilization*; Michael S. Kimmel, *Manhood in America: A Cultural History* (New York: Free Press, 1996). In an interview one industry executive

Conclusion

Using a gendered lens, this research brings light to an important thread in the fabric of postwar labour relations. Within Canadian meatpacking companies that were national in scope with far flung plants like the one in Edmonton, the imperatives of a modern notion of middle-class masculinity helped generate head office support for a complex, bureaucratic system of pattern bargaining during the high modern era after World War Two. Senior executives' renewed faith in reason, control, and progress, as well as patriarchal gender norms, encouraged them to embrace centralized bargaining as a rational response to the new era of union legitimacy. Yet the system yielded unexpected results, often subverting management's goals of efficiency and control, particularly control over labour costs, by fostering significant cooperation between local management and union leaders. In the 1960s and 70s under growing external pressures, the impulse for more control and rivalry within Canada's small meatpacking oligopoly heightened tensions in local packinghouses. The result was a series of costly labour disputes that pushed wage rates higher and helped trigger the collapse of centralized bargaining in 1984. This local study now turns to the impact of the meatpacking industry on the community of North Edmonton, and the household economies of those who worked in the packinghouses.

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explained that although he worked with some industry executives for twenty-five years or more, and he felt they had "good" relationships, "we were never close."

Chapter Three: "I gave him his spending money" -- Changing Household Economies in the Packinghouse District

A tall brick stack that once vented boiler fumes at the Canada Packers plant in Northeast Edmonton, stands alone today as a silent reminder of the city's once vital meat packing industry and the vibrant working-class community that developed around it during the mid-twentieth century. The stack towers over barren industrial land at a major city crossroad where nearly 2,000 packing men and women converged each day by the 1970s. These workers laboured in one of the three major packinghouses clustered nearby, owned by Canada's biggest packing companies: Canada Packers, Swift Canadian, and Burns Foods. Another 500 workers at the Gainer plant generated a much smaller community of packing workers ten kilometers away, on the south side of the North Saskatchewan River, which bisects Edmonton.[1] They were connected by their work, a common union, and a centralized system of bargaining that helped them achieve unprecedented job security and contract gains.

This working-class community was a product of Edmonton's rapid industrialization at the turn of the twentieth century and flourished in the high modern era of Fordism spurred by industrial unionism following World War Two when local manufacturing industries dominated, particularly the packing industry. The chapter traces the development of North Edmonton, exploring the impact of geography, industrialization, changing social relations, and household economies on the community's working-class culture. It is influenced by the work of feminist labour historians who have demonstrated the importance of reconceptualizing workers within the broader context of family and community to enrich our

[1] Membership records, Edmonton District Labour Council.

understanding of working-class solidarity, militancy and political activism.[2] With gender central to the analysis, the chapter maps the contours of working-class cohesion, contrasting the early twentieth century with the more prosperous era from World War Two until 1979 when the first major packinghouse shut down. How did household strategies and community development affect class cohesion? What strategies did workers and their families use to negotiate the historical forces they faced?

Geographically the chapter focuses on households in the main meatpacking district in North Edmonton where the three largest packinghouses formed a sizeable and distinctive packing community.[3] The neighbourhood of Ritchie surrounding the Gainer plant on Edmonton's south side, receives little attention because it formed a much smaller and less distinctive community of packinghouse workers. The ten kilometers between the two packinghouse communities limited interaction between them, particularly in the early to mid-twentieth century when few could afford cars and local transit was rudimentary. These household economies offer insight into the complexities of Alberta's urban working classes in a province that was predominantly rural until the 1960s.[4] Also, women workers comprised a significant proportion of the packing workforce, particularly during the war and immediate postwar years, which has allowed me to explore the impact of gendered cultural ideals in the

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[2] Bettina Bradbury, " Women's History and Working-Class History," *Labour [Canada]* (19)(1987). Kessler-Harris, *Gendering Labor History*; Ava Baron, "Gender and Labor History: Learning from the Past, Looking to the Future," in *Work Engendered : Toward a New History of American Labor*, ed. Ava Baron (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991).

[3] The packing district was often referred to as North Edmonton during the interwar years, but after World War Two was more commonly identified as Northeast Edmonton. Fort Road History Pamphlet, 2004, from Irene S. personal records. Stephanos Habashi, *"Because of the Color": A Study of Racial Tension in Northeast Edmonton*, (Edmonton: Edmonton Social Planning Council, 1992).

[4] Between 1941 and 1981 the proportion of the province's population living in rural communities shifted dramatically from sixty-six per cent to twenty-three per cent. Gerald Friesen, *The Canadian Prairies: A History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987). 427. Palmer and Palmer, *Alberta*.

household as well as the workplace. Finally, examining the household economies and strategies of packing workers can help us understand the emergence of a nascent collectivist spirit in this community that was atypical within Alberta's predominantly individualistic and reactionary postwar social and political culture. Yet the packing district did not achieve the working-class consciousness and social justice agenda found in Alberta coal mining communities in the mid-twentieth century, where, for example, workers developed union-run medical care and held elaborate May Day celebrations.[5] This chapter builds a foundation for understanding the distinctive politics of Edmonton's packing district.

Packingtown

Edmonton's packing district sprouted in the decade before World War One, when Swift and Burns built plants quite close to each other in North Edmonton. Edmonton's industrialization at a late stage relative to the country's central region limited the emergence of family-owned packing firms rooted in the local community. Instead, regional, national, and international-scale packing companies "that had no loyalty to any particular community" moved in, increasing the potential for worker alienation, rather than paternalistic relations with management.[6] Combined, Swift and Burns employed at least 500 workers by 1912, making the meatpacking industry a key force shaping the district into a working class community at an early stage in the city's development. But much of the potential for developing a vibrant urban working-class culture in the packing district was cut short by Edmonton's economic bust in 1913 and the larger weakness of the western Canadian

[5] Tom Langford and Chris Frazer, "The Cold War and Working-Class Politics in the Coal Mining Communities of the Crowsnest Pass 1945-1958," *Labour/Le Travail* 49, no. (Spring) (2002).
[6] Gilbert A. Stelter, "What Kind of City Is Edmonton?," in *Edmonton the Life of a City*, ed. Bob Hesketh and Francis Swyripa (Edmonton: NeWest Publishers Limited, 1995). 4

economy and the packing industry following World War One. Unstable employment patterns helped undermine attempts to organize during much of the interwar period until World War Two when the local packing community became firmly established.

Nonetheless, in 1912 the politics of municipal annexation made North Edmonton's two large packinghouses the centre of a discrete meatpacking district located ten kilometers from the city's downtown core and informally called "Packingtown,"[7] When citizens in the Village of North Edmonton petitioned the City of Edmonton to be annexed so that they could receive vital city services, such as electricity, water, telephone, and street rail service, Edmonton city council made the annexation conditional upon the area becoming a centre for meatpacking and allied businesses to contain the unsightly industry geographically.[8] Tanneries, varnishing, rendering, and fertilizer plants, soon appeared. Edmonton Public Stockyards, which was among the largest public stockyards in Canada at the time, opened in 1916 to operate twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, cementing North Edmonton's identity as a noisy, dusty and odiferous part of the city.[9] Construction of the Canada Packers plant employing 250 workers in 1936, further expanded the packinghouse population in working-class neighbourhoods surrounding the plants where residents seldom complained about offensive sights, sounds, and smells from an industry to which their livelihood was

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[7] The term Packingtown was used during the early part of the twentieth century, but had fallen into disuse by World War Two. Mair, "Where in the World Was Packingtown?." "A Packingtown Remnant Turns 90 - About Transit Hotel's History," *Edmonton Journal*, no date.

[8] Developers bought up cheaper land in this community as well as others on the periphery of Edmonton's city limits, then divided the land into subdivisions and lots that were sold during the economic boom years before 1913. These 'forced' annexations resulted in a city that was overbuilt and over-extended financially until after World War Two. Edmond H. Dale, "The Role of Successive Town and City Councils in the Evolution of Edmonton, Alberta from 1892 to 1966" (Ph.D., University of Alberta, 1969). 102

[9] "Fort Road History ", (Edmonton: Courtesy of Irene Skoreiko).

tightly bound.[10] Although the district's industrial base became more diversified during the postwar decades, the packing plants and allied industries continued to dominate the local economy. Many Edmonton residents living in other parts of the city viewed the packing district with disdain because of the social stigma attached to the community that developed around this economic base.

Beverly, a coal-mining town on North Edmonton's eastern boundary, was an important part of Edmonton's packing district that contributed to its working-class image, even though it was outside the city limits. Many packing workers chose to live in Beverly where housing was even more affordable than in North Edmonton. Beverly emerged as the poorer cousin to North Edmonton because of its narrow and less stable industrial base. Roughly fifteen coal mines operated in the town of Beverly from the early twentieth century until the 1930s, providing alternative employment for packing workers and farmers, especially during the winter.[11] A few of the larger mines employed as many as 200 workers at their peak, but the number fluctuated greatly. Commodity prices plummeted during the Depression and Alberta's coal industry collapsed completely in the 1950s when oil and gas became more important fuels. A significant number of coal miners took jobs in the packing industry as the industry expanded with the construction of a new packing plant in 1936 owned by Canada Packers. Beverly's dependence on local coal mines bankrupted the community during the Depression and made it primarily a bedroom community for North Edmonton's packing district. Residents of Beverly lived without running water, electricity, or

[10] Canada Packers Clippings File (EMA); *Edmonton Bulletin*, 6 March 1936.
[11] Lawrence Herzog, *Built on Coal: A History of Beverly, Edmonton's Working Class Town* (Edmonton: Beverly Community Development Society, 2000). Geoff Ironside, "Slopes and Shafts," in *Edmonton the Life of a City*, ed. Bob Hesketh and Frances Swyripa (Edmonton: NeWest Publishers Limited, 1995).

gas until the town amalgamated with Edmonton in 1961. Then it could finally afford sidewalks, public transit, and other basic infrastructure.[12]

The social isolation of North Edmonton and Beverly was reinforced by physical isolation from the rest of the city because of limited public transportation. These factors helped foster a degree of local community cohesion.[13] Beverly had no public transit before it amalgamated with Edmonton, forcing residents to walk to North Edmonton to catch a bus or streetcar.[14] North Edmonton had an infrequent streetcar service during the early postwar years and downtown Edmonton did not become easily accessible by public transit until a Light Rail Transit (LRT) line into the district opened in 1978.[15] The community of North Edmonton retained a strong sense of identity well into the postwar era, despite amalgamation, in part because geographic distance and limited transit meant it had to be self-sufficient. As Anne A., a former Swift worker whose family operated a seventeen-acre market garden property in the area from the 1930s until the 1960s, explained:

> North Edmonton was like a little town. We had everything. We had a doctor, and a post office and a hardware and lumber yard, the plants, schools, St. Francis. It was like a self-contained community. And all the people in this greenbelt area felt they were part of it too. And people from Beverly came with their market, with their produce.[16]

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[12] Herzog, *Built on Coal.*

[13] Some residents of the area bounded by 50th Street to the West, what is now the Yellowhead highway to the north, 82nd Street to the east, and roughly 118th Avenue to the south, still referred to this area as North Edmonton during interviews in 2004-2006. Harry S., Helen S., and Irene S., Interview.

[14] Herzog, *Built on Coal.* 67

[15] Ron Kuban, *Edmonton's Urban Villages: The Community League Movement*, 1st ed. (Edmonton, Alta.: University of Alberta Press, 2005).

[16] Anne A., Interview (Edmonton: 2004).

As we will see in Chapter Four, it was during this period of considerable community cohesion in the 1930s and 40s that unionism took root.

Development of an urban working-class identity in North Edmonton was limited in some ways, however, by the substantial size of the local agriculture industry, which complemented employment in the packing plants, coal mines, and railway yards nearby. Haphazard land development on the city's periphery during the boom years because of developer influence resulted in a large market garden area used for some commercial farming after the economy crashed in 1913. To avoid city taxes during the boom, developers bought up land just outside the city and subdivided and sold it as un-serviced acreages before 1913. During the Depression many families turned the unserviced lots into market garden properties from which they eked out a living producing livestock for the packinghouses and fresh produce for the local urban market until well into the 1960s. The city's economic collapse in 1913, from which it did not fully recover until World War Two, also allowed local residents to generate fresh produce for family subsistence on empty lots within city limits that had been vacated by residents who couldn't pay their taxes.[17] North Edmonton retained a strong agricultural influence until the 1960s, but by the 1970s dramatic residential growth had consumed much of the land. Alberta's population grew one third between 1971 and 1981 but Edmonton experienced an even more dramatic growth rate of fifty per cent. At more than 650,000 people in the late 1970s Edmonton had become one of Canada's major urban centres.[18] In the packing district new suburban residents who voiced growing

[17] Vacant Lots Garden Club formed in 1916 to rent vacant land within the city limits to urban farmers to grow vegetables for market. Kathryn Chase Merrett, *A History of the Edmonton City Market, 1900-2000: Urban Values and Urban Culture* (Calgary, Alta.: University of Calgary Press, 2001).
[18] In 1946 the city's population was 113,116. Canadian census data, 1946, 1971 and 1981.

resistance to the sights, sounds, and smells of the packing plants, began to outnumber packing workers, which put pressure on the city to close them.[19]

Low pay and the irregular, often seasonal terms of wage labour had contradictory effects on working-class identities in the period before World War Two. On the one hand it prevented many workers from identifying with a single workplace, yet it also fostered a common sense of dissatisfaction among those in the community who experienced job and income instability. The rhythm of employment offered by the packinghouses changed dramatically with labour shortages and unionization during World War Two, but particularly with centralized bargaining in 1947, which allowed workers to more effectively protect their jobs and raise their standard of living. The economic boom triggered by Leduc's 1947 oil strike expanded local job opportunities, helping generate a stable core of workers committed to the packinghouse who came to identify as packing workers.[20]

The steady stream of sons and daughters from prairie farm families to Edmonton's packing district, which surged after 1947, reinforced a lingering attachment to rural Alberta that in some ways limited the potential for Edmonton's packing district to develop into a cohesive urban working-class community. Initially young men and women were driven by drought and plummeting commodity prices, but by the 1940s and 50s many were attracted to the city by expanding job opportunities.[21] Although rural influence could foster a collectivist culture of mutual aid and barter, it could also mean that some residents left the city on weekends and for extended periods in the spring and fall to help out on the family farm.

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[19] The 1965 city-commissioned "odour" report on the packinghouses was one symptom of this change. K.S. Pennifold, "Odour Generation in Packing Plants."

[20] Palmer and Palmer, *Alberta*. 300

[21] *Ibid.* 300. The proportion of residents living in urban Alberta jumped from less than fifty per cent in 1951 to seventy per cent by 1961.

Those who grew up on a farm also had little formal education and few skills because many farm families found it too expensive or difficult to send their children to high school prior to 1947 when there was no school busing in rural areas. If they had to choose among children, parents were more likely to pay room and board for a son than for a daughter to attend high school because of the gendered cultural assumption that men needed education to get a good job while women were expected to marry and become economically dependent on a husband. This meant women coming of age in the 1940s and early 50s often had less education than their brothers. Until the late 1960s and 1970s, a significant number of local residents were immigrants raised in semi-feudal agricultural societies in Europe where schooling beyond the elementary grades was less valued or simply unavailable. They had no experience with unions.

This schooling deficit persisted throughout the study period. Census figures reveal that residents of Northeast Edmonton had significantly less education than the average for the city as a whole in 1946 and that this disparity had changed little by 1981.[22] Limited formal education and language skills generated a large pool of unskilled labourers for local packing employers and posed a significant barrier to community involvement and labour activism. Ella Goruk, who immigrated with her parents to an Alberta farm as an infant from Germany

[22] In 1946 Northeast Edmonton had twice as many residents with less than five years of schooling compared to all of Edmonton. Similarly, the number of residents who had not attended high school was thirty-four per cent for all of Edmonton, but forty-nine per cent for Northeast Edmonton. In 1981 there was a higher level of education in Edmonton generally. The proportion of Northeast Edmonton residents who had not completed Grade Nine and who had started but not completed high school was fifty per cent higher than the average for the entire city. In addition to Edmonton figures, see Edmonton Social Area #2 in the 1946 census of Alberta and census tracts 42.02, 59, 60.01, 71, 72, 73 and 74 in the 1981 census. Canada. Dominion Bureau of Statistics, *Census of the Prairie Provinces, 1946 = Recensement Des Provinces Des Prairies, 1946*; Statistics Canada., *1981 Census of Canada.* Volume 2, *Provincial Series : Population, Private Households, Census Families in Private Households = Recensement Du Canada De 1981. Volume 2, Série Provinciale : Population, Ménages Privées, Familles De Recensement Dans Les Ménages Privées* (Ottawa: Statistics Canada, 1984).

in 1927, attained only a Grade Four education because her parents placed her at work as a domestic on nearby farms from the age of eleven during the Depression. Goruk felt she did not get actively involved in the union at Canada Packers where she worked from 1949 until the plant shut down in 1984 largely because of her limited schooling.[23] Those with little schooling or formal training had limited job alternatives, which meant they tended to stay in the packinghouse regardless of chronic labour shortages in the province.

Edmonton's packinghouse district was also distinctive for its ethnic diversity, compared to the rest of the city, which added another source of marginalization to the complex working-class identity of many local residents throughout the twentieth century. A racialized east-west class divide between the Anglo-Celtic-dominated west end's exclusive neighbourhoods and the east end's "foreign element" was firmly in place in the city by 1906.[24] It was a microcosm of Alberta society and the prairie provinces more broadly in the first few decades of the century. A massive influx of European immigrants to the Canadian West to access cheap land and jobs in the region's expanding resource industries meant that by World War One half the prairie population had been born outside the country.[25] The Anglo-Canadian elite who dominated the emerging prairie society in the early 1900s and valued all things British became hostile to the large numbers of East and Central European immigrants, particularly Slavic peoples, whose arrival threatened their "ideal of the West."[26]

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[23] Goruk, Interview.
[24] Carl Betke, "The Original City of Edmonton: A Derivative Prairie Urban Community," in *Town and City: Aspects of Western Canadian Urban Development*, ed. Alan F. J. Artibise, *Canadian Plain Studies* (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center, University of Regina, 1981).
[25] Friesen, *The Canadian Prairies*. 244
[26] Howard Palmer has illustrated this "widely held view" with an excerpt from the *Edmonton Bulletin* from January 10, 1906: "The ideal of the West is not only greatness, but greatness achieved under the British Flag and stamped and moulded by the genius of race." Palmer and Palmer, *Alberta*. 78. By 1941 Ukrainians were the third largest ethnic group in the province at 9.03 per cent, which was only slightly less

Anglo-Canadians were most hostile toward ethnic groups that were seen as difficult to assimilate, such as Aboriginal peoples, blacks, and Asians, even though these groups were a small proportion of the population.[27] Ukrainians were also singled out as a group because the bloc settlements they developed in the region north and east of Edmonton, within which they retained their language, dress, and culture, made them appear more resistant to assimilation. During the Great Depression public concern about "foreigners" intensified among government officials in response to the growing influence of the Communist Party of Alberta, which was involved in most of the strikes and marches that were organized. Although led by Anglo-Saxons, roughly ninety-five percent of the party's membership was comprised of non-Anglo-Saxons, particularly Ukrainians. The Ukrainian Labour Farmer Temple Association (ULFTA) was the largest ethnic organization affiliated with the Communist Party in Alberta, which heightened Anglo-Canadian hostility toward Ukrainians, and other non-Anglo-Saxons in the province, even though the majority were not involved in radical politics.[28]

Ukrainian immigrants quickly became the focus of nativist fears among Anglo-Canadian social reformers, politicians and journalists in the region who saw them as "a primitive people with extraordinary proclivities for crime and vice."[29] Gregory Robinson's study of Ukrainian-related criminal cases in Alberta during the early twentieth century debunks the claim that Ukrainians performed a disproportionate number of crimes. But he demonstrates that the nature of the crimes performed by Ukrainians reveals an abject poverty

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than Germans at 9.8 per cent. Those of British origin represented 50.17 per cent. ———, *Peoples of Alberta: Portraits of Cultural Diversity* (Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1985). xi

[27] Those of Asian heritage were the target of some of the greatest Anglo-Canadian hostility, although they represented less than one per cent of the population. Palmer, *Patterns of Prejudice*. 170. Robin W. Winks, *The Blacks in Canada: A History*, 2nd ed. (Montreal ; Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997). 305-6, 381.

[28] Palmer, *Patterns of Prejudice*. 132-135

[29] Robinson, "Rougher Than Any Other Nationality?." 147

and cultural predisposition to violence that Anglo-Canadians emphasized to legitimize their discriminatory attitudes. Most thefts involved everyday items of very little value stolen from Ukrainian neighbours, which Robinson links to the severe impoverishment of Alberta's first generations of Ukrainian immigrants. He traces Ukrainian immigrants' pervasive use of violence to resolve conflict to their harsh treatment by the landed gentry in the European regions of Galicia and Bukovyna. There it was customary for the gentry to use "systematic violence" to control Ukrainian peasants labouring on their estate. Robinson argues that peasants subjected to physical punishments "for substandard performance or as an incitement to greater achievement" perpetrated violence within their own family and community.[30] Conditioned by this legacy of violence, Ukrainian-Canadian immigrants often submitted with resignation to authority figures yet displayed a hair-trigger temper and quickly resorted to physical force in arguments. Spousal assault, by women as well as men, corporal punishment for children, and assaults among siblings and community members, were not uncommon.

Robinson identifies two generations of socially alienated young Ukrainian-Canadian men who constructed distinctive notions of rough masculinity that the Anglo-Canadian elite used to depict young Ukrainian males as dangerous and primitive. The "Jack movement" developed during the early twentieth century within the first generation of young male Ukrainian immigrants in reaction to their childhood experience of severe poverty and "the psychological scars of their violent past."[31] Many became itinerant labourers working on farms and railway gangs, in construction or logging camps, and in mines with no real hope of social mobility during this pioneer era in the province. It was a male movement of rebellion

[30] *Ibid.* 156
[31] *Ibid.* 156

against the existing social order. The young men were distinguished by their indifference to the future and their celebration of "individual freedom, comradeship, valour, virility, cunning, action, adventurousness, and revelry." Jacks valued highly "brute strength and fighting prowess; and scorned formal education and religion."[32] Robinson suggests that the violence and abuse Ukrainian men experienced in frontier work camps contributed to the Jack movement.

A second generation of alienated youth emerged among the sons of pioneer Ukrainian immigrant families in Alberta during the 1920s. For these men, called "the Bulls," a childhood of extreme privation, with endless household chores, lack of free time for play and no opportunity for education, left them with limited social skills and considerable resentment. They idolized the Jacks and adapted their anti-social philosophy of "don't-worryism" with "hell-raising [as] an effective outlet for discontent."[33] Robinson's study provides insight into the discriminatory attitudes of Anglo-Canadian observers who condemned these sons of Ukrainian immigrants for their "hot-temperedness" and their use of weapons in a fight, which violated British notions of "the fair fight." Robinson explains that the pervasive culture of physical aggression in Ukrainian-Canadian society triggered strong defensive attacks with the closest weapon at hand – often a household or farm implement, a rock or a stick. Although Anglo-Canadians were seldom the victim of these attacks, which often occurred at Ukrainian-Canadian weddings, they asserted their ethnic superiority by claiming the Ukrainian settler did not know "how to fight like a white man."[34]

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[32] *Ibid.* 159
[33] *Ibid.* 163
[34] *Ibid.* 173

The complementary image of Ukrainian-Canadian womanhood cultivated by the Anglo-Canadian majority in Alberta reinforced nativist attitudes. Seen as "uniformly passive, helpless, downtrodden, and lacking a native tradition of self-help for change," Ukrainian immigrant women were caricatured as obedient and servile toward men, prone to being child brides, and suffering domestic violence because of the cultural dominance of Ukrainian males in marriage. They were also alleged to have poor housekeeping standards. Feminist historian Frances Swyripa argues that this "distorted and incomplete" picture helped to legitimize the Anglo-Canadian goal of assimilation and enhanced the image of Anglo-Canadian women as "angels of the hearth – pure and delicate, respected and respectable, loving and loved."[35] It also encouraged Anglo-Canadian men to "refuse to let their wives and daughters work on the land because Ukrainian women, who were a lower breed, did so."[36] This larger material and cultural context helps explain the prevalence of ethnic slurs and blatant job discrimination experienced by East and Central Europeans, particularly Ukrainians, in Alberta until well into the postwar period as an Anglo-dominated prairie society strove to shape the province in its image to preserve its privileged social position.[37]

Alberta's recent settlement and early identity as a colonial outpost also helped generate a deeply rooted gender conservatism in the province that constrained the lives of working women in particular ways. As Lindsey McMaster has explained, anxieties about the "modern" working girl were intensified in the Canadian West where a compressed rate of resource industrialization employing only men, and greater ethnic diversity because of

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[35] Frances Swyripa, *Wedded to the Cause: Ukrainian-Canadian Women and Ethnic Identity, 1891-1991* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993). 35

[36] *Ibid.* 58

[37] Palmer and Palmer, *Peoples of Alberta.*

immigrant settlement, created a "shortage of white women." These women were seen "as cultural carriers and agents of social uplift" central to the imperial project of reproducing British "civilization" in colonial outposts like Edmonton. To white middle-class social observers young single women who gravitated to the expanding urban centres to work "seemed to embody all that was unnatural and unnerving about modern times: The disintegration of the family, the independence of women, and the promiscuity of city life."[38] Catherine Cavanaugh has demonstrated that the pioneer context in Alberta reinforced "a traditional patriarchal social order that dictated a dependent womanhood."[39] In her study of Alberta women's struggle to secure equitable property rights for married women in the early twentieth century, Cavanaugh identifies tremendous resistance from the male-dominated government, courts, and society. Land was the central form of wealth in the booming economy and, as one prominent government official proclaimed, "it was in the best interests of the west" that women were denied the right to homestead or to become equal shareholders in the family farm because women would not make the land as productive as men, and owning land could make them independent of marriage.[40] This link between dramatic economic expansion -- when the economic stakes are highest -- and gender conservatism helped delay progressive provincial legislation to support the rights of women more generally in the post-1945 era when Alberta enjoyed a more sustained economic boom.[41]

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[38] McMaster, *Working Girls in the West*. 2-3. See also Sarah Carter's work, particularly Carter, *The Importance of Being Monogamous: Marriage and Nation Building in Western Canada to 1915.*

[39] Catherine Cavanaugh, "The Limitations of the Pioneering Partnership: The Alberta Campaign for Homestead Dower, 1909-1925," in *Making Western Canada: Essays on European Colonization and Settlement*, ed. Catherine Cavahaugh and Jeremy Mouat (Toronto: Garamond Press, 1996). 191

[40] Alberta law did not recognize the right of women to an equal share in family property until 1979 when Alberta farm woman Iris Murdock won her divorce claim to half the family farm, triggering matrimonial property legislation based on the principle of joint ownership. *Ibid.* 192

[41] *Ibid.* 209

Although the vast majority of Ukrainian immigrants took up homesteading in Alberta and the other prairie provinces throughout the early and mid-twentieth century, male family members often left the farm on a seasonal basis for wage work to supplement a meager family income. Those working in resource industries were quickly stigmatized by the larger society as dangerous and violent in labour disputes, which erupted apace with industrial development on the prairies. Some migrated to Edmonton's packing district where their farming background gave them a leg up in the local labour market. North Edmonton attracted migrants from Anglo, French, German, and Ukrainian farm settlements. A few came from tiny rural black communities in Amber Valley, Campsie, Wildwood, and Breton.[42]

Immigration came to a standstill during the Depression and war years, but Alberta received nearly 180,000 immigrants between 1946 and 1966, including Portuguese, Greeks, and Italians as well as political refugees and displaced persons. Edmonton's economic boom attracted a disproportionate share of the new immigrants, reinforcing its position as the most ethnically diverse city in Alberta.[43] Many ended up working in Edmonton's packing plants as the industry expanded and turnover remained constant despite rising wages, because of the harshness of most entry-level jobs. During the postwar decades Ukrainians remained the dominant non-Anglo ethnic group in North Edmonton. In 1946 fifteen per cent of residents chose Ukrainian as their mother tongue compared to seven per cent in the city as a whole, according to census data. French, German and Polish placed a distant third at roughly three

[42] Palmer and Palmer, *Alberta*. 67
[43] Stelter, "What Kind of City Is Edmonton?." 10

per cent each in Northeast Edmonton, which was not very different from the rest of the city.[44] Nativist attitudes toward Ukrainians declined during World War Two because many young men and women were quick to enlist in the armed forces. A postwar influx of Ukrainian immigrants who vehemently opposed Communism because of their first-hand experiences with Soviet Russia in the 1930s and 40s began to erode the leftist image of Ukrainian-Canadians. Postwar prosperity and the immigration of a more educated cohort of Ukrainians also reduced their distinctive impoverishment as a community.[45] But it was not until some time after a Ukrainian-Canadian was elected mayor of Edmonton in 1951, that it became possible for those with a Ukrainian surname to get a job in government services or Anglo-Celtic-run businesses.[46] As Helen Potrebenko has explained, "Not until the 1950s were Ukrainians and other Slavs in Canada regarded as white people"[47]

During the early postwar years school children in Edmonton's packing district still felt the sting of discrimination rooted in both their ethnicity and their community, which were conflated in the minds of many Albertans. In a 2004 interview exploring local attitudes toward Ukrainians, Irene S., whose father worked at the Swift plant for many years, said she felt no discrimination as a second-generation Ukrainian-Canadian in the packing district until she and neighbouring children had to travel outside their community to attend high school in the 1950s: "...we weren't discriminated because ... there were so many Ukrainian packing plant kids, or packing plant-associated like Cassians with their pigs, you know. Everybody was kind of the same. And we never noticed it until we had to go to Grade Nine at another

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[44] Canada. Dominion Bureau of Statistics, *Census of the Prairie Provinces, 1946 = Recensement Des Provinces Des Prairies, 1946.*
[45] Palmer and Palmer, *Alberta.* 294
[46] *Ibid.* 310
[47] Helen Potrebenko, *No Streets of Gold: A Social History of Ukrainians in Alberta* (Vancouver: New Star Books, 1977). 26

school and then we were the Ukrainians from North Edmonton – which wasn't a good thing." Although Ukrainian support for the war effort during World War Two began to erode social prejudice, major employers like Alberta Government Telephones and the City of Edmonton rejected Ukrainian job applicants based on their name alone in the 1950s. "If you had a Ukrainian name don't even go and apply, whether you had an education or not," exclaimed Helen S., Irene's mother.[48]

Racial and ethnic differences created social tensions within the packing district as residents jockeyed for position within the local social hierarchy. The stigma attached to those seen as non-white was felt keenly in North Edmonton during the community's first half century. Alice Jamha, whose father was an Anglo-Canadian civil servant living in North Edmonton, was forced to wait until she was twenty-one years of age in 1947 to marry Roy Jamha, a worker at Canada Packers, because her parents refused to sign the marriage documents. In a 2004 interview Alice Jamha explained that her husband also grew up in North Edmonton but was considered non-white by Alice's parents because of his family background. Roy Jamha's father was a Lebanese immigrant whose skin colour and occupation as a "peddler" trading furs with Native Indians in Northern Alberta made him seem "odd" in Edmonton society. Roy Jamha inherited his Swedish mother's fair hair and skin tone, but his two siblings shared their father's Lebanese looks. The Jamha family's unstable income and the stigma of interacting closely with "Indians" by living with them, eating their food, and becoming conversant in their language through trading, also made him seem like a social outsider to Alice's family.[49] In an interview, Helen S., the wife of former

[48] Harry S., Helen S., and Irene S., Interview.
[49] Alice Jamha, Interview (Alberta Beach: 2006).

Swift worker Harry S., recalled being told that she was the first parent in her teenage daughter's circle of friends to welcome into their North Edmonton home the teenage child of one of the few black families employed in a local packinghouse during the 1950s and 60s. Her daughter had the youth over to the house with a few other friends and she explained, "We came home and he was just scared out of his wits, he was ready to run." When Helen S. did not ask him to leave, the boy told her, "You are the first family that has never thrown me out of the house when they come home and they find me."[50]

By 1981 Edmonton was home to a growing number of people seen as non-white after Canada adopted less overtly racist immigration rules, which seemed to create additional ethnic tensions in the community. More than ten per cent of the city's population was from Third World countries such as South Asia, the Philippines, Vietnam, Korea, Latin America and the West Indies, compared to less than one per cent in 1946.[51] Roughly twenty per cent of those immigrants were political refugees. Many moved to Northeast Edmonton neighbourhoods in the 1970s to access cheaper housing.[52] Europeans were still the dominant immigrant group, but the percentage of Asian immigrants in neighbourhoods close to the packing plants had risen from one per cent in the 1940s to five per cent.[53] The affordability of cars had allowed many workers to move some distance from the packing plants, and Asian workers often chose to live in more suburban neighbourhoods like Mill Woods.[54]

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[50] Harry S., Helen S., and Irene S., Interview.
[51] Canada. Dominion Bureau of Statistics, *Census of the Prairie Provinces, 1946 = Recensement Des Provinces Des Prairies, 1946.* Census of Alberta, Population Volume, Table 30, Population by Citizenship and Sex.
[52] Palmer and Palmer, *Alberta.* 333
[53] Statistics Canada., "1981 *Census of Canada.* Volume 2, *Provincial Series: Population, Private Households, Census Families in Private Households = Recensement Du Canada De 1981. Volume 2, Série Provinciale: Population, Ménages Privées, Familles De Recensement Dans Les Ménages Privées.*
[54] Palmer and Palmer, *Alberta.* 333

Nevertheless, a municipal study of Northeast Edmonton, conducted shortly after two of the area's packinghouses shut down and the provincial economy went into the doldrums, showed that the district stood out from the rest of the city because of significant levels of racial discrimination.[55] These tensions developed alongside the rising number of immigrants, particularly those seen as non-white in Northeast Edmonton. By 1981 Alberta as a province had the highest proportion of residents with mixed or multiple ethnic origins in Canada.[56]

The high rate of migration from other provinces in the 1970s, particularly Ontario, triggered by intense economic growth, also weakened community cohesion. By the 1980s half of Edmonton's population was born outside of Alberta.[57] Garth Stevenson has argued that the Alberta government and media cultivated "provincial and Western chauvinism" and blamed Ottawa for a host of misfortunes amidst rising conflict over energy policy and bilingualism "to promote a sense of solidarity and identity as 'Albertans,' rather than as Canadians, westerners, or members of a class."[58] The government's goal was to socialize newcomers to the province during the 1970s oil boom when their attachment to the province was almost entirely economic. Alvin Finkel has linked the government's emphasis on self-reliance and individualism to former Premier Ernest Manning, an evangelical Christian who condemned socialism in the postwar decades because he felt an interventionist government might leave individuals "without the need to seek God's help to find salvation on their own."[59]

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[55] Habashi, *"Because of the Color."*
[56] Garth Stevenson, "Class and Class Politics in Alberta," in *Essays in Honour of Grant Notley: Socialism and Democracy in Alberta*, ed. Larry Pratt (Edmonton: NeWest Press, 1986). 231
[57] *Ibid.* 228
[58] *Ibid.* 233
[59] Finkel, *Our Lives*. 99

The main religious divide in the packing district during the postwar decades was between Catholics and Protestants, but those interviewed felt that it did not create significant conflict within the working-class communities of the packing district. Interviews revealed that children growing up in North Edmonton during the early and mid-twentieth century were quite aware of this religious divide because of separate schools. In response to an interview question about the importance of religion, Irene S. recalled that during the early postwar years when she was growing up the Catholic and public schools were two blocks apart in North Edmonton and kids from the two schools "yelled at each other."[60] But most packing workers felt that when they grew up people paid little attention to religion because it was considered a private matter. Nevertheless, Edmonton had a large Catholic community, among the most substantial in Western Canadian cities during the interwar period, because of its concentration of Franco-Canadians and East and Central Europeans from predominantly Catholic countries, including Ukraine, Russia, Poland, Germany, Austria, Italy and Portugal.[61] St Francis of Assisi Parish, which was established close to the packinghouses in 1909, provided an important social and spiritual focus for many Catholic packing workers throughout the period when the plants were in operation.[62]

Alvin Finkel has argued that the "forceful rhetoric" about individualism, free enterprise and self-sufficiency pronounced by Alberta's evangelical Premier Ernest Manning helped foster a society that was in many ways more conservative than most other parts of the

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[60] Harry S., Helen S., and Irene S., Interview.
[61] Palmer and Palmer, *Alberta*. 204
[62] In 1944 the UPWA local at Canada Packers was planning to suggest that a priest be their representative on the labour board in an arbitration case over certification. John Lenglet, "Re: Father Foran and Swift Certification," (LAC MG 28 I-186, 84-536 Box. 44, Swift correspondence, 1944). I found no further evidence that a local church or other religious institution played a significant role in any of the meatpacking labour disputes before the 1986 Gainer strike, when St. Francis Church became a rallying place for strikers and their supporters.

country. Premier Manning's beliefs also took hold because there was very little effective political opposition in Alberta. As Finkel has explained, "the government became more and more the only voice heard from Alberta concerning the beliefs of Albertans."[63] The Manning government's practice of banning "communist propaganda" films and those that featured "mild social criticism" -- Hollywood films *The Wild One* and *The Blackboard Jungle* were banned in the 1950s -- illustrates both the conservative political climate that this government engendered and the authoritarian approach to governing that it modeled.[64] It helps explain why Alberta lagged significantly on human rights issues.[65]

There is evidence of an alternative, more collectivist vision of society in Edmonton's packinghouse district during the postwar decades, despite this larger conservative social and political context. In his study of postwar American employment reforms, Sanford Jacoby found that much higher levels of job security resulting from strong unionism reduced the geographic mobility of workers, which produced greater community stability: "changes in the workplace and in the community were mutually reinforcing."[66] In the early 1950s a group of twenty workers at Canada Packers informally organized a cooperative housing project to build houses for themselves during the city's severe housing shortage.[67] Each of the four packinghouses developed a credit union, which allowed workers who could not afford

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[63] Finkel, *The Social Credit*. 218
[64] *Ibid.* 108
[65] Lois Harder, *State of Struggle: Feminism and Politics in Alberta* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2003). Maureen Riddell, *The Evolution of Human Rights Legislation in Alberta, 1945-1979*, ed. Alberta Human Resources and Employment (Edmonton: Alberta Government, 1979).
[66] Sanford M. Jacoby, *Employing Bureaucracy: Managers, Unions, and the Transformation of Work in the 20th Century*, Rev. ed. (Mahwah, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2004). 206.
[67] Alex Goruk, "Packing Workers Build Homes on Co-Op Plan in Edmonton," *Canadian Packinghouse Worker*, August 1952. On the same page in the union newsletter the national office emphasized that it did not see an initiative like the Edmonton co-op as the solution to Canada's housing crisis, instead stating that it "lies in Public Housing, financed and planned by the Federal Government."

regular bank rates, or lacked a credit record, to get a loan. At least one credit union has survived the city's packing industry, albeit in greatly altered form. Packing workers were also central to the development of a cooperative grocery store and gas bar in the community, which thrived until the 1990s.[68]

By the 1960s and 70s the affordability of private cars had reduced the district's relative physical isolation for many packing workers. A rising number of packing families chose to buy a home in new communities untainted by North Edmonton and Beverly's long history of economic and social marginalization. Roughly a third of those interviewed moved away from the working-class neighbourhoods surrounding the packinghouses in the 1960s and 70s. Long-term workers who started at the plants in the 1940s and 50s and remained in the first home they bought are over-represented in the interview sample, so it is likely that a higher proportion actually moved away. At the same time new residents with no connection to local industries began to move into the area because of the city's dramatic growth rate in the 1960s and 70s. The arrival of Light Rail Transit connecting the community to Edmonton in 1978 accelerated the transformation of the packing district into a densely populated suburb in which fewer people knew their neighbours and packing workers were a much smaller proportion of the community.

Household Economies

In 1930 newlyweds Charlie and Annie K. developed a household economy that was typical of many Edmonton packinghouse families during the interwar years. Charlie worked full-time at the Swift plant as an unskilled worker for the low wage of roughly eleven dollars a week, depending on the industry's seasonal demands. Annie stayed home full time even

[68] Kereliuk, Interview.

before they had the first of their two children, but took in laundry for five dollars a week. She also performed heavy unpaid manual labour hauling wood and water for the home, and tended a large garden. In these ways she contributed to the household's cash income and stretched dollars to help secure the family's economic survival during the harsh Depression years when her husband earned a low, insecure wage. It was also a time when the heavy demands of household labour and childcare, and high unemployment levels made it socially unacceptable and difficult for married women to go out to work. Thirty years later when Vicky T., who worked full-time at the Burns plant, married, she earned more money than her husband, whose job was in retail. As a result both spouses continued to work full-time through the birth of two children and throughout their married life. Vicky hired family and neighbours to care for their children but performed the bulk of unpaid household labour herself.[69]

Contrasting who went out to earn wages and who performed much of the unpaid domestic labour in these two families captures one of the dramatic changes in the household economies of Edmonton packinghouse workers between the 1930s and the 1970s. Greater job security, rising incomes and, by the 1960s, the ability of married women to keep their packing job through marriage and multiple pregnancies spawned a greater diversity of household economies, particularly among women workers. This combination of change and continuity reshaped household economies in ways that affected family dynamics and working-class community cohesion and militancy. Women's growing role as an income-earner gave some women more opportunity and incentive to get involved in their union. The inability of most families to live on a male packing wage represented an important continuity,

[69] Vicky T., Interview.

however, in the era of strong union power, causing packing families to develop a variety of strategies in pursuit of economic security, many of which were not centred on union power.

During the early twentieth century the dominant pattern of household economies in North Edmonton and Beverly was typical of communities in the early stages of industrialization, which slowly laid the foundation for working-class cohesion. Mainly farm workers were being drawn into a capital-worker relationship in the packinghouse within a semi-rural environment where, as former Swift worker George Kozak has explained, "everybody had cows, chickens, pigs, geese, everything. It was all bush just like out in the country," and barter was an important feature of family economies.[70] Wages were low and much of the work in Edmonton packinghouses and other nearby industries was irregular and seasonal. As we saw in Chapter Two, women had access to only ten per cent of jobs in the packing industry during the interwar years, and earned roughly half the basic male wage. Public resistance to married women working during the Depression years when their dependence on a husband's wage was assumed and so many men were unemployed, ensured that most of those women were young and unmarried. Although there were a few widowed, separated or divorced women in the packinghouse, female breadwinners were a very small minority in the community.[71] It is not surprising, then, that in most local households the main income earner was a male, and women performed most of the unpaid domestic and caring work in the home. Women supplemented male wages with fresh produce from

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[70] Kozak, Interview Transcript.

[71] Figures for meat canners and curers in Alberta reveal that in 1936 of 106 male workers 64 were married and 42 were single, but there were no widowed or divorced male workers. In comparison, seventy-six women worked in this occupation and seventy were single, only five were married and there was one who was either widowed or divorced. Canada. Dominion Bureau of Statistics, "Census of the Prairie Provinces, 1936 = Recensement Des Provinces Des Prairies, 1936," (Ottawa: King's printer, 1938). Alberta, Vol II, Table 7: Gainfully occupied, 14 years of age and over, by occupation, conjugal condition, and sex.

tending a household garden, raising a few livestock, and other informal strategies like performing work within the household for cash and scavenging. Often older children had to go to work before finishing school in order to help make ends meet, particularly if there was a family crisis, such as the illness or death of a parent.

Ideology was central to shaping this pattern of household economies. Historians of the family have demonstrated that during the early stages of industrialization the inadequacy and unreliability of male working-class wages meant women's unpaid labour and cash earned in the home were crucial to a family's economic survival. Yet the labour to reproduce the working-class each day, including shopping, feeding, clothing, cleaning, caring for children, the elderly and the sick, and efficiently managing the household's scarce resource was rendered invisible by the dominant middle-class ideology of separate spheres.[72] This labour was also devalued because it was seen as "natural" for women. The idea that women should be confined to the home and men should have exclusive access to the public world of paid work gave rise to the myth of the male breadwinner, which attached an apparently objective value to men's labour but gave no equivalent value to women's unpaid and paid labour in the home. As a result, the social power of women was reduced in the household as well as the larger society, and women's domestic labour in the home became privatized, making the household less open to community interventions.[73]

Debra Fink's study of rural mid-western American packinghouse workers provides insight into how these ideas influenced the economic strategies of working-class households

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[72] Bettina Bradbury, "The Home as Workplace," in *Labouring Lives: Work and Workers in Nineteenth-Century Ontario*, ed. Paul Craven (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995).
[73] Jeanne Boydston, *Home and Work: Housework, Wages, and the Ideology of Labor in the Early Republic* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1990). 27-28. Bradbury, *Working Families*.

during the period prior to World War Two. Fink found that unlike middle-class families working-class families always valued women's paid and unpaid labour and saw it as necessary, but they avoided describing wage labour performed by women as "work," because of the "social disapproval, the suspicion of 'indecency'" attached to any labour performed for wages by women outside the family, particularly in a factory environment dominated by men.[74] Similarly, historian Mirta Zaida Lobato found that married packing women in mid-twentieth-century Argentina constructed their work as a "necessity" that "helped" their husband, whom they described in oral interviews as the real breadwinner. The low-status image of packing work as labour performed by "macho men with knives" made it particularly unfit for women. In addition to the violence and marginality associated with the packinghouse in Argentina, there was a popular perception that repugnant smells "penetrated a woman's body and even produced male rejection."[75] Both authors found that these gendered representations of paid labour resulted from and reinforced the unequal power relations between men and women in the household.

In Edmonton's packinghouse district similar ideas helped keep most working-class women out of the wage labour-force before World War Two and obscured the central role their unpaid and paid labour played within the family economy. This household pattern emerged in interviews with former Edmonton packing workers, two of which offer a glimpse into family economies during the interwar period.[76] The family in which Anne A., a former

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[74] Fink, *Cutting into the Meatpacking Line*. 76-77

[75] Lobato, "Women Workers in the "Cathedrals of Corned Beef"." 60

[76] The broader analysis relies on interviews with thirty-one families that had at least one family member working at one of Edmonton's packinghouses during the era of centralized bargaining. The sample is not strictly representative of all packing families because two thirds of the individuals interviewed were of East-European heritage -- mainly Ukrainians -- and entered the packinghouse during the 1940s and 50s. Ukrainians were actually approximately one third of the packing community in Edmonton. Workers who

Swift worker, grew up during the Depression and World War Two was typical of families that operated a small market garden on the north-eastern edges of Edmonton. Her family earned a subsistence living from a seventeen-acre property supplemented by their own seasonal wage labour and barter arrangements for the labour of others. Anne's earnings at Edmonton's GWG plant and then the packing plant were crucial to the household economy after her father's sudden death in 1945 when she was fourteen, which threw the family into financial crisis.

Before her father's death, the family observed a strict gender division of labour shaped by patriarchal norms. Anne's father immigrated from a small Ukrainian community on the Russian border before World War One and married her mother, a Ukrainian immigrant from Galicia who was much younger than her husband. They had very little education – her father had one year of formal schooling and her mother had none – which meant their opportunities for alternative employment were limited. Throughout the interwar years the couple, who had four children to support, raised 200 hogs, which they sold to the Swift plant. They also grew vegetables that they sold at Edmonton's City Market each Saturday during the growing season. In the winter her father hauled coal with his team of horses. Cash played a limited role in the family's household economy. They bought only basic staples like salt and sugar, even grinding their own wheat into flour at the Ogilvie Mill nearby. Their operating expenses were minimal because they had no running water, electricity or gas – Anne took full advantage of hot showers available to her as a worker at the Swift plant from 1949 until 1952. The family met most of its labour needs through barter arrangements.

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started their family before 1960 also tended to be long-term packing workers. Those who worked in one of the plants for only a short time, particularly during the 1960s and 70s, are under represented.

Anne's father was known for taking in new immigrant men from the old country when they first arrived in town. They helped out on the property until they found a paying job.[77]

In the household the domestic labour of Anne's mother was rendered largely invisible by conventional gender norms, judging by the childhood memories her daughter related from a distance of more than sixty years. Anne said her father, who was "a very easy going man," determined how many male boarders they took on, but the cleaning and cooking required to support them created considerable extra work for Anne's mother and grandmother, who also lived with them: "Mother sometimes wasn't very happy – she had to do a lot of cooking." When her father died of a sudden heart attack, these patriarchal norms compromised the support of a close friend of the family whose labour was vital to the household economy. Shortly after her father's death Anne's "Uncle John," a boarder with severely injured hands who had helped out the couple for so many years that he had become one of the family, felt compelled to leave the household to protect her mother's respectability. A short time later the man took his own life. Anne's older brother continued to live at home while working full time and she was forced to leave school to work at age fifteen to help make ends meet while her two younger siblings were still in school. Her mother also began grading potatoes in the root cellars of other market garden properties in the packing district for very low wages, a job she performed for many years.[78]

Similarly, in the household economy of Charlie and Annie K., with which I began this discussion, Annie's domestic labour was not valued by either her or her husband as much as his paid labour in the packinghouse. Much like the mid-Western rural American women

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[77] Anne A., Interview.
[78] *Ibid.*

interviewed by Debra Fink, Annie did not describe her contributions as "work" in an interview with me more than seventy years later. Asked how she helped support the family, Annie explained, "Well I was at home looking after that little shack, cutting wood, bringing water, washing clothes, I had a little garden -- I plant in the garden." It was her son Henry who interjected, "But you were washing clothes for somebody else too, Mom," which elicited a story about how she washed clothes for an elderly neighbour across the back alley to bring cash into the household.[79] This array of household tasks, many of which were quite physically strenuous, and all of which contributed substantially to the family's economic survival, was seen as "natural."

Charlie K.'s labour at the packinghouse appeared to be more highly valued by the family. According to his son, Charlie chose an early work shift because it suited him. When he returned from his job at 2 p.m. he did not perform any domestic work because he claimed: "'That's not my work.' He said 'I bring home the bread and butter and I'm tired.' He would come home and he would lay down and have his afternoon snooze there until supper was ready and that would be it."[80] Annie accepted virtually complete responsibility for domestic work within the home, including caring for the couple's two children, the eldest of whom was severely disabled by epilepsy and lived at home until his death at age forty-nine. One exception was Sunday brunch. Henry explained that on weekends Charlie often "chased" Annie out of the kitchen to "go visit somebody or something" and cooked an elaborate breakfast for the family. As Joy Parr noted in her study of non-traditional households in which women worked full-time during this period, men tended to choose meal preparation

[79] Annie K. and Henry K., Interview (Edmonton: 2004).
[80] *Ibid.*

over the more onerous tasks of laundry and child-care when helping out for pragmatic reasons.[81] Charlie K.'s preparation of Sunday brunch also appeared to be a response to his wife's extraordinary care-giving responsibilities. Yet the sense of resentment Henry felt toward his father for ordering his only able son to perform countless household tasks suggests that Charlie K. was exempted from much of the household labour and enjoyed significantly more power and control within the family because of his perceived status as the male breadwinner. Annie K. seemed to accept having less say than her husband within the household, judging by her less active role in the interview as well as the anecdotes related. For example, Henry was required by his father to drive at an early age so that he could chauffeur his father, who bought a car and took out a license to make his son a legal driver in his early teens. Charlie never actually drove the car himself. Annie, who wanted to learn to drive, was not allowed by her husband.[82]

Vicky Beauchamp (neé Huclak), who began working at Canada Packers in 1956 as a summer student when she was sixteen, explained in an interview that for her escaping paternal authority on the family farm was one of the attractions of the packinghouse:

> We didn't have a problem even entering the work force, even going into the meatpacking plant, because we knew how hard we had to work at home. And really, [she chuckled] we didn't get the benefits, the Dad got them, the money for whatever.[83]

[81] Parr, *Gender of Breadwinners*. 90
[82] Annie K. and Henry K., Interview.
[83] Vicky Beauchamp, Interview (Edmonton: 2004).

Beauchamp's attitude suggests she wanted more control over the fruits of her labour than she could have while living at home. In patriarchal nuclear families like Annie and Vicky's, undervaluing the unpaid labour of women and ascribing distorted importance to a male "breadwinning" wage limited the power of women within the household. During the interwar and World War Two years, however, the predominance of similar household economic strategies and gender dynamics in families throughout the community likely enhanced working-class cohesion.

This gendered pattern of household and wage labour and social relations began to change during World War Two as large numbers of women, including a small number of married women with children, were drawn into the packinghouse because of labour shortages. During the immediate postwar years when the plants were dominated by married men and young single women, the plants generated several distinct types of household economies. Many men were young and single when they were hired because the work was physically demanding, and they often married quickly because of the good wages and job security.[84] Whether single or married, most men did not perform much domestic labour. Nevertheless, young families could not survive on a male packing wage, despite rising wages and improved benefits. During the 1940s and 50s the wives of many male workers generated income either by taking part-time work or by performing services in their home. Alice Jamha, who was a seamstress, had a sewing machine next to the playpen when her two children were small. She made wedding dresses for $10 while her husband worked as a

[84] In 1961 eighty-two per cent of male packing workers were married, up significantly from less than sixty per cent during the Depression. Canada. Dominion Bureau of Statistics., *Census of Canada, 1961: Recensement Du Canada. Labour Force. Main-D'oeuvre.* Canada. Dominion Bureau of Statistics, *Census of the Prairie Provinces, 1936 = Recensement Des Provinces Des Prairies, 1936.* Table 7, Gainfully Occupied, 14 Years of Age and over, by Occupation, Conjugal Condition, and Sex; Tables 9 and 10, Gainfully Occupied, 14 Years of Age and over, by Occupation, Birthplace, Racial Origin and Sex.

semi-skilled labourer at Canada Packers from 1947 to 1951. In an interview she said most of the wives of male packing workers that she knew brought in extra income somehow and were constantly looking for ways to stretch the family's income: "We were frugal in those days because we were poor. A lot of the plant workers' wives worked somewhere...they'd work part-time or they'd babysit each other's kids...we helped each other. Those women were all good cooks and they worked hard and they had gardens."[85]

In the few families that were able to manage without a second income when their children were young, the husband took on extra work, sometimes an extraordinary amount. Fred, who earned a good wage as a certified tradesman in the maintenance department at one of the largest packinghouses from the 1930s until the 1980s, felt he was able to support his wife and three children throughout the years he and his wife were raising their children. Nevertheless, in an interview his wife explained:

> I had a big garden, a vegetable garden. We managed fine. I just had the two kids eleven, twelve years old until the next one was born. We managed fine on his wages, although at times he would go plumbing, he would take on two jobs. Somebody would say they needed some plumbing done – he'd go do it. That's the way we managed. I was a very frugal person.[86]

The couple did not buy a car until well after they married and Fred carpooled with a neighbour to save on transportation costs. Former Canada Packers worker Jed O., who earned significantly less as a semi-skilled labourer, explained that he was able to support his wife and four children during the 1950s and 60s by always having at least one job other than

[85] Jamha, Interview.
[86] *Fred and *Mary, Interview.

his work at the packing plant. Jed said he drove a taxi, waited tables in a restaurant, operated a farm, and built four houses for resale at various points in his married life: "I used to paint at night underneath the eves with the roller till 11 o'clock at night in the fall and have a trouble light on the ground laying so I can see what I'm doin'." Reflecting on his work history many years later, Oleinyk described his former self as "greedy," saying he did not need to work as much as he did, although he appeared to take pride in the fact that this allowed his wife to stay home with the children: "She never worked though, she never worked."[87] The couple's marriage ended in the 1970s.

Single mothers represented a very small minority in the packinghouses before the 1960s, but, judging by the activism of Ethel Wilson, who became vice president of the Burns local in the 1940s, they could have a major impact on union solidarity and militancy because of their strong commitment to wage labour.[88] Ethel Wilson took a job at the Burns plant to support her three children when she was deserted by her husband in the midst of the Depression.[89] Greater job security and union wages after the war allowed the young, single women without children who dominated female jobs in the plants to live independently in diverse ways that on balance seemed to enhance community cohesion and working-class activism. Many young single packing women roomed together or with other young women workers in small rented apartments during the 1940s and 50s. Although they were well paid compared to women in more traditional female jobs, very few earned enough to live alone. As we will see in Chapter Six, rooming and socializing with other women workers helped

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[87] Jed O., Interview.
[88] Census records reveal the marital status of packinghouse workers by gender, but do not reveal whether they had children. One interview revealed a woman worker with three children who was ostensibly "single" in the 1950s but was partnered clandestinely with a married man.
[89] "Ethel Wilson Clippings File," (Edmonton Municipal Archive).

foster an unprecedented level of female activism in the packinghouse at a point in their life cycle when these women had considerable time and energy to put into union work and were increasingly committed to a lifetime of wage labour. When Gloria Kereliuk started at the Swift plant in 1951 at the age of eighteen, her financial support and labour were not needed on the family farm in Peace River country north-west of Edmonton. Kereliuk's packing wage allowed her to live in an apartment with a woman co-worker and accumulate savings, which became a significant downpayment for a mortgage when she eventually married. She could afford the cost of dancing at local halls with other women workers several nights a week and had time to bowl and play softball on plant teams. It was while working as a single woman and socializing with other packing women in the 1950s that Kereliuk became heavily involved in union work as a vehicle for improving her education and pursuing community service to influence her terms of work in the packinghouse. Kereliuk played a key role in the organization of union schools, a women's union committee, and the community co-op credit union and grocery store.[90] The household economy of single women packing workers appears to have been a significant factor shaping female union activism in the 1950s.

A smaller number of young women had significant domestic responsibilities, which limited their opportunities for workplace activism. Those who chose to remain closely involved in the family farm out of family need or loyalty, found they had little time for plant social activities and the union. Vicky Beauchamp, who came from a farm family of seven children, started full time at the Swift plant in 1959 at the age of nineteen and didn't marry until she was thirty-five. Initially she roomed with family friends in the city to keep her living expenses low and traveled every weekend to help on the family farm. The industry's

[90] Kereliuk, Interview.

strong wage gains allowed her to make loans to family members – she helped her brother buy livestock and her parents buy furniture. Much like Anne A., who had little time to get involved in social activities with co-workers because of the need to help out her recently widowed mother, Beauchamp was limited by her frequent trips to the family farm.

The changing demographics of the female workforce and the household economies of many packing families became a major constraint on women's workplace activism after women won the right to keep their job through marriage and multiple pregnancies. For the first time a significant number of families with young children had both spouses working in the packinghouse where women in particular earned more than the wage paid for traditional female jobs such as waitressing, cleaning, and clerical or retail work. Single parents -- mainly women -- were another important trend. Eleven of the packing families interviewed began having children before 1955, and of those eleven the K. family with a severely epileptic son was the only one in which the mother did not leave the home to earn wages during the marriage. Only one woman, however, worked full time outside the home throughout the period when her children were young.[91] Two of the women who had worked in the packinghouse before having children returned to the packinghouse on first a part-time or seasonal basis while their children were young, then took on full-time work when their children were teenagers or young adults in the 1970s. For most of these women their time out of the formal labour force was fairly limited because the majority of families had only an

[91] This pattern is consistent with American studies of packing workers, which have found that African-American families relied more heavily on the paid labour of married women than white east and central European households. See Horowitz, *Negro and White*. 64

average of two children, which meant a shorter period of intensive childcare.[92] This family size represented a significant generational change because most workers came from large farm families of four to eight children. The Westacott family, with seven boys born throughout the 1950s and early 60s, was an exception, and Mary Westacott earned wages for only nine months in 1969 to help pay for a cabin the family had bought. Her husband, Vince Westacott, worked in the office at Swift but most office workers made less than unionized production workers, so the couple said they learned to live quite frugally.[93]

Families that began having children after 1954 were much more likely to have both spouses working full time, a pattern that correlates with a decline in women's union activism analysed in Chapter Six. According to interviews, fourteen of the twenty-eight couples started their families after 1954. In half of those households wives worked full time in one of the packinghouses. Shortly after the marriage bar for women was eliminated at Swift in the late 1950s Gloria Kereliuk married a packing worker and started a family. This ended her involvement in the union, because Kereliuk said that working full-time and having four children – the first of whom died before his first birthday – absorbed most of her time and emotional energy in the 1960s, before she left the plant to stay at home full-time when her husband's job became more stable. Kereliuk's savings from nineteen years in the packinghouse provided a substantial downpayment on a home and Kereliuk shifted her energies into community work where she became exceptional for her volunteerism.[94] Swift worker Gerry Beauchamp said his first wife worked in the office at Burns where she earned

[92] One family had no children and another had only one child. Twelve families had two children and ten families had three children. Two families had four children, one family had five children and one family had seven children.
[93] Westacott and Westacott, Interview.
[94] Kereliuk, Interview.

much less than unionized workers, but her income, even after paying for childcare, was important to the household economy. Beauchamp, an unskilled labourer, explained that in the majority of packing families both the husband and the wife worked for wages because "they wanted more things...and it's like anything else, if there's two working in the family then you can afford to buy these things."[95] For the Beauchamp family the extra full-time spousal income made vacations, a second and then a third car, and postsecondary education for their three children, affordable.

Vicky T., with whom I opened this discussion of household economies, earned more than her husband, representing one of the new types of household economies that emerged during the era of national bargaining. Asked how the couple managed their finances, Vicky explained that they used her income to qualify for a mortgage:

> I paid all the bills – I actually even gave my husband spending money weekly and his cheques just went in the bank. That was for our holidays, or if we needed a car, or whatever... So that's how – and maybe by doing it like that maybe that's how we got ahead because in eight years we paid this house off. It worked good for us because he just put his money in the bank. Like, I gave him his spending money, his cigarette money, gas money.[96]

This family economy was the exception, not the rule – most full-time packing women earned much less than their husband – but the visibility of Vicky's economic contribution through wages appeared to give her more power and control within the household because her paid labour was more highly valued than the unpaid domestic labour most often performed by

[95] Gerry Beauchamp, Interview (Edmonton: 2004).
[96] Vicky T., Interview.

women within marriage. This economic contribution also gave women the incentive and the potential to make union involvement a significant strategy for increasing the family's economic security. Former Swift worker Karen Bozak, whose father and husband were heavily involved in the local union, became a union steward and held the position of Recording Secretary for five years. Asked why she became involved, Bozak, who had one child to arrange babysitting for in the 1960s and 70s explained, "I was always interested and I always stood up for my rights," which was an attitude she said she saw modeled by her father.[97] Former Burns worker Ellen B. emphasized a variety of ways in which she saw value in her union involvement, yet also acknowledged that it caused some difficult moments for her children when she got home late.[98]

Single mothers became a significant demographic group among packing workers by the 1970s, and oral interviews suggest a generational difference in their response to unionism based on their start date in the packing industry.[99] When Ellen B. left her marriage in 1970 with three children -- the youngest a toddler -- she returned to Edmonton's Burns plant, after a gap of some years. She had worked at Burns as a young single woman in the 1950s and throughout the first eight years of her marriage. Ellen soon became heavily involved in the union, seeing it as an important vehicle for change in a job that was crucial to her strategy for survival as a sole-support mother. Yet Margaret, who left her husband around 1970 with two school-aged children, felt only disdain for the union when she began working at the Swift plant in 1975, and chose to pursue economic security through frugality. Margaret isolated

[97] Karen Bozak, Interview (Edmonton: 2006).
[98] Ellen B., Interview.
[99] The limited number of women I interviewed who started in the 1970s allows me to be suggestive, but is insufficient to make a generational claim about changing gender and class practices and values.

herself from co-workers and expressed active dislike toward the union. Ellen's receptiveness to the union seems linked to her years of work at Burns in the 1950s when UPWA was most commonly seen by workers as a powerful vehicle for change. Margaret, on the other hand, saw union leaders as indifferent to worker concerns and overpaid. She blamed the union for the shutdown of Edmonton packinghouses and the unfavourable layoff terms for workers. Although some of Margaret's alienation from the union may be attributed to the 1998 plant shut down that left her unemployed, the interview made clear that this packing worker had no use for unions "from day one."[100] In short, there is no clear indication that the growing phenomenon of single parenthood among packing workers was a force for working-class cohesion and union activism during the 1960s and 70s.

Housework and Childcare

Women continued to take responsibility for much of the unpaid domestic labour and childcare in their household during the postwar era of national bargaining, which, in two-income families in particular, tended to limit their opportunities for union activism. Asked whether the fact that she earned more than her husband affected who did the housework, former Burns worker Vicky T. stated emphatically, "No!"[101] Despite the arrival of city services throughout the packing district, and the introduction of new household appliances that lightened housework by the 1960s, women workers considered their domestic responsibilities arduous when their children were small and most described juggling work and home as the most challenging aspect of their packing job. Male workers, in comparison,

[100] *Margaret, Interview (Edmonton: 2006).
[101] Vicky T., Interview.

talked very little about domestic tasks and readily acknowledged that their wives performed the bulk of this work.

Feminist scholars have demonstrated that the powerful cultural assumption that men were the main income earners and unpaid domestic labour was the responsibility of women, was reinscribed more firmly in the postwar decades after years of Depression and war that had disrupted gender norms. This expectation was reflected in management's assumption that male workers could perform more overtime than women and would not take time off to attend to a sick child because they had a wife attending to the family's domestic needs. As Meg Luxton and June Corman found in a late twentieth century study of Hamilton steelworkers: ""For many men, this responsibility as income earners justified their reluctance to do domestic labour and reinforced their assumption that it was women's work."[102] As a result most packing men performed only highly masculinized roles in the household such as cutting the lawn, shoveling snow, doing minor repairs or, in areas like food preparation, barbecuing the meat, carving the roast, and producing Sunday breakfast, as Charlie K. frequently did.[103]

Gerry Beauchamp, the former Swift worker whose wife worked full-time in the office at Burns explained that "once in a while" he vacuumed and "fed the kids," but most of the time he did the "outside work" and his wife did the "inside work." Significantly, "outside" work is more limited than the "inside" work of shopping, cooking, cleaning, and laundry, not to mention caring for children. Ella and Alec Goruk, who both worked full time at Canada Packers while raising their two children in the 1950s and 60s, developed a system in which

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[102] Luxton and Corman, *Getting by in Hard Times*. 44
[103] Dummitt, "Finding a Place for Father." Annie K. and Henry K., Interview.

household tasks were divided more equitably, although Ella still performed a disproportionate share of the work. Alec shopped for groceries Thursday nights while Ella cleaned house and did laundry so that the family could leave Friday to spend the weekend at their cabin. Ella also prepared all the food, including seasonal canning, and often came home on her lunch hour to put a piece of meat in the oven for supper that night.[104]

Mary Westacott, the wife of former Swift office worker Vince Westacott, emphasized the importance of neighbours rather than her husband when asked how she managed the domestic workload raising seven boys while at home full-time. Mary said she could never afford to hire help. As Vince explained, "I don't think I did very much. I always did a little bit of ironing. But I was mostly at the plant working. Mary did all the housework."[105] Women who started their families in the 1960s and 70s and worked full-time were noticeably more resentful about the workload they carried. Beverly P., who started at Canada Packers in 1977, envied a woman co-worker who claimed her husband helped out with domestic work on a regular basis.[106] Karen Bozak, who worked full-time at Swifts for many years beginning in 1963 while raising her only child, said she "finally" paid for a cleaning service in the 1980s because her husband, a Canada Packers worker and union leader, refused to perform cleaning tasks around the house.[107] The persistent gender division of household labour reinforced patriarchal norms and authority in the home and left women with much less time for activities outside the household, including union work.

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[104] Goruk, Interview.
[105] Westacott and Westacott, Interview.
[106] Beverly P., Interview (Edmonton: 2006).
[107] Bozak, Interview. Karen Bozak's husband Roger Bozak was president of Edmonton's Canada Packers local for a number of years in the 1970s.

When women finally won the right to take multiple maternity leaves in all the plants by the late 1950s, they accepted responsibility for organizing childcare and shaping their workday around it much more than their male partner. Unlike communities where working mothers were a more substantial proportion of households, in the postwar decades there was limited accommodation of women workers by management or the larger community in Edmonton's packing district.[108] Packing companies, however, appeared to expect less overtime from women than from men, judging by union grievances and oral accounts. Also, Canada Packers responded to pressure from women workers in the 1960s to reduce the lunch hour from one hour to half an hour so that workers were finished at 3:30 pm when school ended, instead of 4 pm. There is no evidence from oral interviews that formal daycare was available in the communities of Northeast Edmonton. The limited nature of these accommodations reveals how common it was to assume that men were the only breadwinners in this community.

How did families cope? Parents relied on relatives, close friends, a neighbour, or a landlord to care for their children while they worked. In many cases childcare arrangements were stressful as parents juggled their children's needs with work demands. Some men played a significant role in childcare, particularly if shift work was involved. In several families husbands and wives worked different shifts, which minimized their childcare costs,

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[108] Here I refer to Joy Parr's study of household economies in the town of Paris, Ontario where management in local textile mills was forced to accommodate the domestic responsibilities of women workers to a greater extent because they comprised a majority of the workforce. Parr, *Gender of Breadwinners*. Linda Trimble argues that the inability of women to achieve a critical mass within the Alberta government helps explain the government's refusal to address women's issues in the 1970s, including the need to protect pregnant working women from being fired, to legislate more generous maternity leave, and to tackle the problem of the gendered wage differential. Linda Trimble, "A Few Good Women: Female Legislators in Alberta, 1972 -- 1991," in *Standing on New Ground: Women in Alberta*, ed. Catherine A. Cavanaugh and Randi R. Warne, *Alberta in Nature and Culture Series* (Edmonton: The University of Alberta press, 1993). 87-118.

but created other kinds of stress. Diane D. worked the day shift at Gainer's in the 1970s and 80s, starting at 7 a.m. and finishing at 3:30 p.m. when her husband left for the evening shift. "Basically he looked after the kids during the day. They'd go to the sitters for a couple of hours, I'd pick them up, it was just – like, to tell you the truth now, I don't know how the hell we did it but we did it, and I would not want to do that again, it's just, you know it was so stressful..."[109] Fathers often shared the task of driving children to the sitter, or driving the sitter to and from the home, particularly if the sitter was a relative. Vicky T. found that taking her children out to a sitter worked best for the first five years. Vicky did all the preparations the night before so that her husband could simply bundle the children into the car and take them to work at a more reasonable hour than her early starting time would allow. She then picked them up when she returned from work earlier than him.[110] Many women chose to work a day shift that finished at 3:30 pm and tried to avoid overtime to be at home when their children's school day ended.

Childcare demands were especially daunting for sole-support mothers, who became more numerous in the 1960s and 70s after changes to Canadian legislation made divorce more accessible.[111] Burns worker Dolly L. paid her landlady to care for her children when she worked nights from 10 p.m. until 6 a.m. during the late 1950s and early 60s. By the 1970s a growing number of packing households with children were headed by sole-support

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[109] Diane D. and Sonia R., Interview (Edmonton: 2004).
[110] Vicky T., Interview.
[111] A company-generated list of forty-six women working at Canada Packers in the late 1960s reveals that eighty per cent of them were married and of those women sixty-three per cent had children. It is unclear whether any of the "married" women were in common-law relationships. CFAW Local 243, "Canada Packers President's Notes on Plant Problems," (Edmonton: UFCW Local 1118, 1965-1977). Married Women List.

mothers who worked full-time at one of the plants.[112] Ellen B., who left her marriage in 1971 with three young children, managed by hiring two successive young women to be live-in caregivers over roughly a decade. The arrangement worked beautifully with the first woman who "was so wonderful with the kids," but after nearly seven years Ellen encouraged her first caregiver to go back to school so that she was not confined to childcare work. The second young woman had a baby of her own out of wedlock and the two women babysat for each other in the evenings. This communal arrangement allowed Ellen to become heavily involved in her union local and hold an executive position throughout the 1970s. Margaret, on the other hand, took a fiercely independent approach to her family economy and childcare when she started working at the Swift plant in 1975 with two children in middle school: "I never talked about my private life at all. They didn't know anything about my private life. It's personal. I never burdened it to anybody." In the evenings she laid out her children's clothes, prepared a hot lunch for them to eat when they came home at noon, and gave them strict rules about television and keeping the door locked: "I never cooked out of a tin can or a package. I was up early and went to bed late."[113] Margaret had left an abusive marriage with only "two bits" and emphasized her "strong values," like self-reliance and hard work as the key to her ability to survive as a packing worker and single mother. Many of those values – she chose not to smoke, drink or swear – kept her aloof from most co-workers, reinforcing a philosophy of self-sufficiency that was at odds with union collectivism. The contrast between the approaches used by Ellen B. and Margaret as single mothers in the 1970s

[112] In the 1969 Canada Packers survey of forty-six women workers three were either separated or widowed with dependent children. That number likely increased significantly during the 1970s after Canadian divorce law was liberalized in 1969. Nationally it more than doubled between 1968 and 1970. *Ibid.* Alison L. Prentice, *Canadian Women: A History*, 2nd ed. (Toronto: Harcourt Brace Canada, 1996). 381-82

[113] *Margaret, Interview.

demonstrates the diversity of household economies, and hints at how a woman worker's subjectivity and interest in union involvement could lead to different child care strategies.

One other notable change in the economic strategy of packing families after the war resulted from the importance they placed on educating their children to keep them out of the packing plant. Few workers had a son or daughter working in the industry. Several workers said they told their children not to take a job in the packinghouse. Former workers whose parents could not afford to keep them in school for long during the Depression or war actively encouraged their children to complete high school and even postsecondary education. As Gerry Beauchamp, born in 1933, explained: "When I went to school I was good in school but my mother couldn't afford to send me to university." The postwar generation of parents who benefited from strong contract gains could more easily afford to keep their children in school longer than their own parents and felt there were better alternatives to jobs in the packinghouse, despite the union. The few children who worked in the packinghouse did so as a student during the summer or stayed only briefly, leaving after a few years. This generational change weakened local working-class cohesion within and among families as children often moved away – sometimes across the world – and some took professional jobs that placed them firmly in the middle class.

Finally, the desire for financial security compelled a number of households to develop strategies that drew their time and energy away from the packinghouse community and the union. The only male worker interviewed who remained single for most of his life supported the union but never became actively involved, choosing instead to put most of his energy into investments and, as he became successful, golfing. This man, who started at the plant as an unskilled labourer in 1947, returned to his parents' home to save money after a

brief marriage that ended in 1955. Living frugally with first his parents then his sister allowed him to put his savings into real estate investments, which became sizeable over time because of Edmonton's booming economy. His investment income allowed him to golf at a private Edmonton club for many years and to buy a home in a comfortable middle-class neighbourhood some distance from the packing district by the 1970s. This man's household economy was exceptional, but it demonstrates how little connection some workers felt to the working-class community anchored by Edmonton's packing plants, despite ethnic ties – his parents were Ukrainian immigrants. This worker clearly saw personal savings and investments as a more promising route to financial security than union activism.

Two other packing families interviewed bought and operated a farm in addition to their packing job as a form of security. Charlie K., who worked through the Depression and war, owned a small 160-acre farm on marginal land that brought in a small income "for a little protection" during the 1950s and '60s in case there was another war or depression, according to his son Henry, who said his Dad "was always thinking ahead, if something ever broke out here in the city there'd be nothing to survive on. At least over there you'd have a cow or chickens or potatoes or whatever you can survive on."[114] Farming was such a common preoccupation among Edmonton packing workers that the city's union locals were constantly pressuring the national union for more generous leave-of-absence policies in negotiations so that workers could take time for spring planting and the harvest each year.[115] The union was very aware of how "moonlighting" affected union involvement and discouraged workers from taking on additional work, but the desire for greater financial

[114] Annie K. and Henry K., Interview.
[115] Jed O., Interview.

security that was to some extent a legacy of the economic vicissitudes of the recent past, drove a number of households to put their energy into enterprises that took them out of north-east Edmonton. On balance this seemed to weaken solidarity and union activism.

Electoral Politics

I turn now to the larger political context to sketch the electoral impact of the packing community. Edmonton's packing district developed a distinctive leftist political identity from the early twentieth century that was sustained throughout the era of national pattern bargaining, but it was unable to assert strong working-class political representation until the 1980s. One obstacle during the early and mid-twentieth century was a system of electoral representation in Edmonton that systematically marginalized working-class neighbourhoods. During the boom years before World War One when the first plants were built, the city's municipal government was dominated by "aggressive municipal politicians" and developers who devised a system of "at large" aldermen to limit the influence of east-end residents. Rather than a ward system, which would have allowed working-class neighbourhoods to elect someone who represented their particular interests, each city councillor was elected by voters across the entire city. The district's labour sympathies were apparent in 1907 when the East End Ratepayers' Association offered to endorse any two candidates nominated by Edmonton's Trades and Labour Council for the municipal election that year.[116]

[116] Alvin Finkel, "The Rise and Fall of the Labour Party in Alberta, 1917-42," *Labour/Le Travail* 16, no. Fall (1985). 63. See also Betke, "The Original City of Edmonton." 324-326. The strength of Edmonton's community league movement is seen as a direct reaction to the "overpowering political force of the Chamber of Commerce, its business tycoons, and the developers who were reaping fortunes." Kuban, *Edmonton's Urban Villages*. xix.

During the early interwar years the working-class polls in Edmonton's east end provided support for Labour candidates at both the municipal and provincial level.[117] By 1930, however, voters in Edmonton's east end had become disillusioned with the conservatism of the United Farmers of Alberta (UFA) and the Canadian Labour Party's (CLP) unwillingness to criticize the provincial government.[118] In federal election nominations the community firmly supported Communist CLP candidate Jan Lakeman, who insisted that Labour take a stronger stance against the UFA and emphasized "worker mobilization rather than the call for reforms."[119] Like many Albertans, voters in Northeast Edmonton shifted their allegiance to the new Social Credit Party under William Aberhart in 1935. A growing perception that the Social Credit was unstoppable at the provincial level dampened the interest of many urban working-class voters in politics at both the provincial and municipal levels. Municipal election voting turnouts that had averaged fifty per cent during the 1920s and early 30s plummeted during the war. In Edmonton only sixteen per cent of the electorate voted in 1944, "and the turnout was particularly light in working-class districts."[120]

A new political climate in Alberta after World War Two helped constrain effective working-class political representation at all levels of government. Alberta shifted further to

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[117]The Canadian Labour Party was originally the Dominion Labour Party and the Alberta wing of the party came out of the trade union movement. Finkel, "The Rise and Fall."

[118] In addition to the election of Dan Knott, a printer, polls in Edmonton's east end helped elect twelve Labour aldermen between 1913 and 1938, eight of whom were trade unionists. It is worth noting, however, that Edmonton's labour vote was significantly smaller than that of Calgary and other industrialized areas of the province in the 1926 provincial election, at 19.6% compared to 28.7% in Calgary and 41% in Edson, a mining community. *Ibid.* 69, 80. UFA Premier John Brownlee antagonized the working classes by using provincial police to support management in coal mining labour disputes, and by disrupting protest marches of the unemployed in Edmonton in 1931. Palmer and Palmer, *Alberta.* 216; Caragata, *Alberta Labour.* 104.

[119] Finkel, "The Rise and Fall." 82

[120] *Ibid.* 95, f.n.143

the right under Ernest Manning, a Christian fundamentalist who became premier after William Aberhart died suddenly in 1943. Manning's philosophy of individualism made him stridently opposed to collectivist initiatives. The "brittle" atmosphere of anti-communist "hysteria" that came to dominate Canadian politics with the advent of the Cold War in the late 1940s was nowhere more apparent than Alberta, where the Manning government passed film censorship laws, draconian labour legislation, and used a particularly virulent anti-communist rhetoric.[121]

In Edmonton voter turnouts for municipal elections dropped to as little as ten per cent during the 1950s – the minimum required to pass money bills – allowing a business-sponsored Citizen's Committee (C.C.) slate to dominate local politics to a degree that made Edmonton distinctive among major Canadian cities during the decades following World War Two.[122] Its members held every council seat from 1945 to 1959, and held a majority of seats until the 1970s, making a middle-class, male-dominated Anglo-Canadian minority virtually the only voice in municipal politics. The structure of Edmonton's municipal government reinforced the C.C.'s control. Until 1968 a property qualification disqualified some workers from voting. The ward system that was finally introduced in 1968 was configured in a way that divided working-class districts, again limiting the voice of Edmonton's working classes.

According to political scientist James Lightbody, when real change came to Edmonton's municipal politics in the 1970s it came from a new urban intelligentsia. Recently-hired American academics at the University of Alberta familiar with major urban

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[121] ———, "The Cold War; ———, *The Social Credit.*

[122] The Citizen's Committee splintered after 1959 when one of its most popular members, William Hawrelak was discredited by a finding of gross misconduct in a land deal. Although they operated under a variety of names, including Civic Government Association, those representing business interests continued to dominate city council until the 1970s. James Lightbody, "Edmonton," in *City Politics in Canada*, ed. Warren Magnusson and Andrew Sancton (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983). 280

problems in large American cities were in the vanguard of a reform politics that mounted an effective critique of Edmonton's business-dominated government.[123] This development suggests that the rural background and low education levels of many local residents may have been another factor that limited the packing district's ability to effectively articulate a progressive political voice in the city.

As in municipal politics, the system of provincial representation gave Edmonton five "at-large" provincial members of the legislative assembly (MLA) until 1959, which forced working-class political candidates to win support across the entire city, rather than in just their own neighbourhoods. Although one Canadian Commonwealth Federation (CCF) candidate was elected in Edmonton in the 1948 election with considerable support from the packing community, many in North Edmonton and Beverly voted for another party -- when they voted -- throughout the 1940s and 50s.[124] In 1959 the Social Credit government abandoned proportional representation voting, which had allowed voters to rank several choices of candidate. This move dramatically increased the number of Social Credit seats in the provincial legislature. Even the staunchly conservative *Edmonton Journal* expressed serious concern when the official opposition was reduced to only three seats by 1963 under the new system.[125]

It was in the 1970s, after Peter Lougheed's Progressive Conservative (PC) party swept to power, that Northeast Edmonton voters shifted increasingly away from the PCs and

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[123] *Ibid.* 269

[124] Kenneth A. Wark, *A Report on Alberta Elections, 1905-1982*, ([Edmonton, Alta.: Alberta. Legislature Library, 1983). *Canadian Parliamentary Guide.*

[125] "Another Election: No Change," *Edmonton Journal*, 18 June. The editorial stated that the Social Credit party had a clear majority in only three of the nine Edmonton constituencies, although they won them all. Under the old system, the editor concluded, "there is little doubt that the Opposition parties would have elected at least three members in Edmonton, and probably more."

toward the New Democratic Party (NDP), although an NDP candidate was not elected until 1980 – right after the first packinghouse shut down. Working-class expectations had risen when Lougheed first entered the scene in the late 1960s with talk of provincially-funded daycare and an expanded housing budget, but were disappointed in the 1970s as the new, more interventionist government turned most of its attention to economic diversification and defending what John Richards and Larry Pratt called "the interests of an ascendant regional bourgeoisie."[126]

Ethnicity was another important factor shaping the preferences of voters in Edmonton's packing district from 1945 through the 1970s. Once a riding system was established at the provincial level in Edmonton in 1959 Ukrainian-Canadian candidates representing the Social Credit party or the Progressive Conservatives were elected consistently throughout central and north-eastern parts of the city. These were also the ridings in which Communist and other radical leftist candidates ran most frequently (without ever winning), yet no CCF or NDP candidates were elected between 1955 and 1982 when Ray Martin won Edmonton Norwood for the NDP. Voter turnouts throughout the period were higher than at the municipal level, but distinctly lower in Edmonton than the provincial average, providing further evidence of working-class political alienation.[127] Federally the picture was the same: Between 1953 and 1980 a series of Ukrainian-Canadian businessmen representing the Progressive Conservative Party won the seat for Edmonton East in each

[126] Finkel, *The Social Credit*. 173, 89; Richards and Pratt, *Prairie Capitalism*. 215.
[127] Provincially William Tomyn (SC) and Ambrose Holowach (SC) represented Edmonton Norwood and Edmonton Centre from 1959 to 1971 when Peter Lougheed's Progressive Conservative Party won power. Within riding boundaries that were newly configured in 1971, Bill Diachuk (PC) represented Edmonton Beverly and Catherine Chichak (PC) represented Edmonton Norwood until the early 1980s. Wark, *A Report on Alberta Elections, 1905-1982*.

election. The same leftist radicals often ran federally as well, which was one of the few indications of the riding's strong labour base.[128]

The relative impotence of Alberta's working classes as a political force at any level of government during the decades following World War Two has been the subject of some scholarly study.[129] Several key factors limited the development of working-class identities and cohesive activist working-class communities in the province, particularly during the 1970s economic boom. Alberta's compressed rate of industrial development and urbanization made a significant proportion of its workers the first generation off the farm, which made it more difficult for them to develop a strong working-class identity. Also, the high proportion of newcomers to the province meant that by the 1970s half of Edmonton's population was from another province or another country. Edmonton became one of the most diverse cities in the country racially and ethnically, which created divided loyalties based on a wide range of identities tied to religion, language, and culture, as well as other cities, regions, and countries. State-sponsored multiculturalism introduced in the 1970s reinforced ethnic allegiances in ways that blunted class identities. So did a renewed sense of regional identity as "Albertans" cultivated by the provincial government to socialize newcomers and "promote a sense of solidarity and identity."[130] Provincial-federal conflict between Alberta Premier Peter Lougheed and Canadian Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau over energy policy in the 1970s intensified this provincial chauvinism. It was not until the 1980s

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[128] Federally Ambrose Holowach (SC) represented Edmonton East from 1953 to 1958. William Skoreyko held the seat for the Progressive Conservatives from 1962 until 1979 when Bill Yurko also won the seat for the Progressive Conservatives. Canada. Bureau Of Statistics, *The Canadian Parliamentary Guide and Work of General Reference for the Dominion of Canada*, (Ottawa: [E.J. Chambers] 1908).

[129] Finkel, "The Cold War; Langford and Frazer, "The Cold War; Stevenson, "Class and Class Politics in Alberta; Jack Masson, and Peter Blaikie, "Labour Politics in Alberta," in *Society and Politics in Alberta: Political Research Papers*, ed. C. Caldarola (Toronto: Methuen, 1979).

[130] Stevenson, "Class and Class Politics in Alberta; *Ibid.* 233.

after three of the packing plants had been shut down and the price of oil had collapsed, sending Alberta's unemployment rate soaring, that the NDP achieved a major breakthrough in Edmonton. Ray Martin won Edmonton Norwood for the provincial NDP in 1982, but it was in 1986 – the year of the infamous Gainer strike against Peter Pocklington – that the NDP won the majority of Edmonton ridings, including the working-class districts of Beverly and Norwood.[131]

Conclusion

The industrial and social geography of Edmonton fostered a distinctive working-class community in the former village of North Edmonton from the early twentieth century until the 1970s. Anchored by three major meatpacking plants in close proximity to each other, the community gained a sense of identity from both its physical distance from the city's centre, and the marginalization its residents experienced because of their class, ethnic diversity, and association with the heavily stigmatized meatpacking industry. During the interwar years lack of public transit, low incomes, and more affordable housing prices confined most packing workers to neighbourhoods near the packinghouses, which helped foster community cohesion, despite the constant influx of immigrants, rural migrants, and the influence of local commercial market gardeners well into the postwar era. On the other hand, poor wages, harsh conditions, and lack of job security limited the commitment of many workers to the packing industry.

In the postwar decades the packing district retained much of its character and cohesiveness well into the 1960s and 70s, even though a growing number of packing families began moving away from the plants as cars and new suburbs became affordable.

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[131] Wark, *A Report on Alberta Elections, 1905-1982.*

Unprecedented job security and wage gains encouraged many men and women to become committed packing workers, which helped generate social capital with the development of several credit unions, cooperative enterprises, and many other types of volunteerism in the packing district. It was not until the 1980s and 90s, after the Light Rail Transit line arrived in 1978 and most of the packing plants were gone, that Edmonton's meatpacking district began to transition from a fairly cohesive urban working-class community into a more typical North American suburb. Rising wages and the growing acceptance of married women in local packinghouses during the postwar era also generated a greater diversity of household economies. Powerful patriarchal cultural norms, particularly the myth of the male breadwinner and the assumption that housework and childcare were the responsibility of women limited many women workers' interest in and energy for union work. Despite considerable working-class cohesion in Northeast Edmonton during the mid-twentieth century, the electoral system at the municipal, provincial and federal levels actively constrained the political influence of the packing district. Chapter Four looks closely at the nature of industrial unionism produced by working-class cohesion and militancy in Edmonton's packinghouses, and traces its evolution during the era of national pattern bargaining.

Chapter Four: "An awakening" – Industrial Unionism and the Progressive Impulse

> *It was a real influence on my life because I had never seen that dedication to something. I wasn't religious. I grew up in a family where we did what we wanted to do sort of thing. Everybody had a good work ethic....But because I didn't have any real social conscience - it was an awakening for me.*[1]
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> **Alice Jamha, wife of former Canada Packers worker Roy Jamha, reflecting on the 1947 strike**

In the 1940s an expansive vision of unionism captured the hearts and imaginations of many Edmonton packing workers and their families when they embraced the United Packinghouse Workers of America (UPWA), a progressive, American-based industrial union. Alice Jamha, whose husband Roy Jamha worked at Canada Packers, remembers being inspired by an intoxicating atmosphere of mutual support and dedication to the cause of working people, which she witnessed in Edmonton during the 1947 national meatpacking strike. In an interview nearly a half century later a wave of emotion caught Alice's voice as she related powerful memories of the strike, describing the wives of male packing workers whose commitment to the union awakened her own social conscience when she returned from her honeymoon in the midst of the strike: "I was really amazed at what those women did. They were all young women with children. They formed a kitchen, they fed the guys...I couldn't believe what those women did, and how supportive they were."[2] Alice's husband, Roy Jamha, who was originally hired as a salesman at Canada Packers, refused to cross the picket line during the earlier 1945 strike because of relationships he developed with

[1] Jamha, Interview.
[2] *Ibid.*

unionized workers while placed in different departments as part of a program to familiarize salesmen with the products they sold. When that strike ended management punished Roy by placing him in a harsh production job, where he quickly became involved in the union and "never looked back."[3] Roy later declined repeated invitations from the company to take a management position, instead leaving Canada Packers in the 1950s to play a vital role in Alberta's labour movement.[4]

Alice and Roy Jamha's "awakening" fostered a dedication to the union, a concern about society and a willingness to "fight" for things they believed in.[5] The couple's passionate response to the local packing union in the 1940s provides a glimpse of the ideals around which working-class cohesion and militancy developed among a core group of Edmonton packinghouse workers and their families. This chapter begins by examining the strategies and ideals of packing workers who established industrial unionism in Edmonton during World War Two and helped secure a centralized system of bargaining by supporting the national meatpacking strike in 1947. It then explores the evolution of union leadership in Edmonton's UPWA locals under national pattern bargaining from 1947 to 1979 when the city saw its first major packinghouse shut down. The era of national pattern bargaining is divided into two parts chronologically, with 1966 as the dividing point because of the

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[3] Jamha, Interview Transcript.

[4] Both Roy and Alice Jamha remained fully committed to the labour movement throughout their lives. Like her husband, Alice Jamha became a committed "socialist" who actively supported the CCF and the NDP as well as her husband's involvement in the labour movement while raising two children and earning wages to help support the family after her husband was diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis at the age of 44. Roy Jamha was appointed Political Action Director for the Industrial Federation of Labor of Alberta in 1949, and left Canada Packers to become an organizer for the Oil Workers International Union in 1953. He was elected president of Alberta Federation of Labour in the late 1960s and chair of Alberta's Workers Compensation Board in the 1970s, despite being confined to a wheelchair in 1960. For Alice the depth of his commitment was expressed in his final years when he inspired and helped the nursing aids who cared for him in a nursing home to organize a union. Ibid; Jim Selby, "Labour Leader Roy Jamha Passes Away," (Alice Jamha papers, 2000). Jamha, Interview.

[5] Jamha, Interview Transcript.

national Canada Packers strike that year, which helped initiate a significant shift in the local union's relationship with both local management and internally with upper level union leaders. The chapter traces the sources of unity and division, militancy, and how workers responded to UPWA's progressive ideals of democratic process, egalitarianism, and broad-based social change. Edmonton packing leaders displayed considerable militancy on the shop floor and at the bargaining table, yet despite their numbers, and political activism following World War Two, they were unable to become the strong political voice for Alberta's working classes that they had envisioned.

The Origins of Industrial Unionism and National Pattern Bargaining: 1937-1947

The vision of effective unionism that emerged among Edmonton packing workers during World War Two was shaped by their struggle against employer power in the interwar years. During the Great Depression wage rates, jobs, and promotions were decided at the whim of management, fueling a notion of unfairness and resistance to management power and control among a growing number of workers who became union activists. One major complaint was the "shape-up" system for allocating work. Jack Hampson, who became UPWA's Alberta representative, began working at Canada Packers' new Edmonton plant in 1936, when workers were expected to show up at 7 a.m. with no guarantee of work. If the number of hogs anticipated didn't arrive, or the delivery was late, the foreman would pick and choose among those who appeared, regardless of seniority. "You'd see some guys sitting there that worked for Canada Packers many years, and some kid that come off the street yesterday would be sitting there and he'd get a day's work." Those overlooked were told to "stick around" in case the company needed them, but were not paid for their time. "And

stick around you did – if you walked out of there you're fired. So you sat there."[6] Safety was another major concern -- and not just for those working at close quarters with ever-sharp knives. Alex Goruk remembered scooping dried blood into a gunny sack in the 1930s without a mask to protect his nose and mouth: "For two days after that you're spitting and choking and coughing blood out of your lungs."[7] A 1946 union history of UPWA's rise in Edmonton emphasized the initiative and independence of workers who resisted management's efforts to control them through a company union and the introduction of speed-ups.[8] During these difficult years a sense of unfairness and desire to have a say in their terms of work helped generate considerable solidarity and militancy among Edmonton packing workers.

The close proximity of the three largest packinghouses heightened class cohesion in the 1930s. Despite significant turnover caused by low wages, poor conditions and lack of job security, many workers were quickly embedded in a community network of relatives and friends who also worked in one of the local packing plants. This facilitated an easy exchange of information about the workplace. Within the plants the physically segregated nature of most departments in a five- or seven-storey building created close-knit groups of workers who shared common grievances and supported each other in militant actions, even if they interacted little with those outside their department.

Workers in Edmonton's largest packinghouse, the Swift plant, made the first attempt to establish a union during a national wave of labour militancy following World War One.

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[6] Hampson, Interview Transcript.
[7] Alex Goruk, Interview Transcript (Edmonton: Provincial Archives of Alberta, Warren Caragata fonds, PR1980.0218/3 1977).
[8] John Lenglet, "UPWA 1946 Convention, a Short History of UPWA," (LAC, CFAW fonds, MG 28 I-186, PWOC and UPWA series, Vol 1 UPWA Third Constitutional Convention, 1946).

As an affiliate of the Amalgamated Meat Cutters and Butcher Workmen of North America, a craft union, they were ready to walk off the job in 1919 when the Amalgamated withdrew its support for labour action.[9] By the late 1930s, amidst the Great Depression, local packing workers were attempting to organize under the leadership of the Canadian Victuallers' and Caterers' Union (CVCU), which was chartered with the All-Canadian Congress of Labour (ACCL), a new umbrella group organized by Communists and railway workers to promote industrial unionism in Canada apart from American-based international unions.[10]

Communists were known for their ability to organize, often inspiring workers with direct action tactics like slowdowns or work stoppages.[11] They became a significant influence in local packinghouses as nearby coal mines, where some workers were receptive to communist ideas, began closing down in the 1930s.[12] Many coal miners took jobs that opened up in the local packing industry upon completion of the large, new Canada Packers plant in 1936. Those of Ukrainian heritage, who comprised as much as a third of the local packing workforce, may also have been a source of Communist influence in Edmonton's packinghouses, since working-class Ukrainians were over-represented in the Communist Party of Canada at the time.[13] Communist organizers helped packing workers cultivate a sense of entitlement to fair treatment from management by encouraging them to recognize their inherent dignity and self respect as producers.

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[9] Caragata, *Alberta Labour*. 88

[10] The union established locals only in Calgary and Edmonton. These locals appear to have been the result of grassroots action rather than action at the national level. Montague, "Trade Unionism". Heron, *The Canadian Labour Movement*. 62

[11] Irving M. Abella, *Nationalism, Communism and Canadian Labour: The CIO, the Communist Party and the Canadian Congress of Labour, 1935-1956* ([Toronto]: University of Toronto Press, 1973).

[12] Seager, "Socialists and Workers: The Western Canadian Coal Miners, 1900-21." Langford and Frazer, "The Cold War."

[13] John Kolasky, *The Shattered Illusion : The History of Ukrainian Pro-Communist Organizations in Canada* (Toronto: PMA Books, 1979).

The main goal of Edmonton packing workers became union recognition, in particular the right to form an independent union that gave them some say in their workplace. Workers at Gainer's, the smallest, but oldest major packinghouse in the city, became the first to strike as members of the CVCU local, which was organized by a Communist and included less skilled packing plant workers as well as butchers and meat cutters. The CVCU local struck in 1936 but achieved very limited success, in part because only the killing gang and manual labourers walked out. They also faced strong employer opposition and had little support from their union, which had few resources. Roughly two-thirds of the workforce at Gainer's, the city's small locally-owned plant, walked off the job for seven hours. Although they did not win union recognition, the company raised their wage rates to the level of wages in other local packinghouses.[14]

A multi-plant strike a year later demonstrated the resolve of a core of activist workers in three of the city's packinghouses, but also the power of capital and the partiality of the state. In April 1937 a third of the workers in three city packinghouses held sit-down strikes.[15] Roughly two hundred Swift workers at the city's largest packinghouse were the first to "sitdown" when they were ordered to work a full day on Saturdays. Representing a range of departments the strikers were able to halt production for three days and limit it for another week after workers moved outside the plant and formed effective picket lines.[16] Production was curtailed, but not halted at the Gainer and Burns plants where workers walked out a week later and stayed on the picket line for several days.[17] Only workers at the Canada

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[14] Montague, "Trade Unionism". 61-62
[15] *Ibid.* 61
[16] "New Walkout Marks City Industrial Strife: 15 Employees Quit Work at Snowflake Laundry; Messengers Win Claims," *Edmonton Journal*, 9 April 1937; *Ottawa Canadian Unionist*, April 1937.
[17] "In 5 Tie-Ups City Concerns," *Edmonton Journal*, 10 April 1937.

Packers plant, which was just six months old, remained solidly on the job.[18] Despite recent Alberta labour legislation that appeared to give workers the right to union recognition, the union lost a case it launched against Gainer's to test the law. With impunity, all three companies refused to take back many of the strikers.[19] Some men were black-listed and unable to find any work until the war.[20]

The CVCU's ability to stop production in 1937 made it clear that including all workers, from the most highly skilled tradesman to the unskilled labourer, gave the union valuable economic leverage. The strike also confirmed the belief of many workers that they needed a national union and a centralized system of bargaining to effectively challenge the oligopolistic ownership structure in Canada's packing industry, and the national reach of its companies. These union structures would prevent large packing companies like Swift and Burns from simply diverting livestock to another city during a labour dispute, as they did in the early stages of the 1937 strike.[21] Swift's ability to secure police escorts for strike-breakers, and the provincial government's decision not to enforce the recommendations of a conciliator's report, despite progressive new labour legislation, convinced many Edmonton activists that labour-friendly legislation was not enough – workers had to be politically engaged to generate the political will for enforcement.[22]

Edmonton packing workers, like many workers across the country, came to embrace unionization during World War Two as labour shortages dramatically changed relations of

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[18] "125 Employes in 2 City Firms out on Strike," *Edmonton Journal*, 8 April.
[19] The government of William Aberhart ignored its own new Freedom of Trade Union Association Act, which was passed earlier that year, to crush the Edmonton strike. ———, "Trade Unionism". 68-69; Fudge and Tucker, *Labour before the Law*. 220-221
[20] Caragata, *Alberta Labour*. 129
[21] "Sit-Down Strikers Asked Leave Plant," *Edmonton Journal*, 6 April. ———, *Alberta Labour*. 130
[22] Fudge and Tucker, *Labour before the Law*. 219. Montague, "Trade Unionism". 69

power between workers and management. Edmonton's packinghouses were distinctive within the industry, however, for the particularly vicious and protracted battle between craft and industrial unionists who had different visions of unionism. The intensity of this struggle also demonstrated the persistent power and influence of both management and government in Edmonton's meatpacking industry during the war.

A number of factors suggest that craft unionists, who were the first to organize, had active support from management from the outset. Edmonton Butchers, Meat Cutters, and Packinghouse Workers' Federal Union, Local 78, which was affiliated with the conservative Trades and Labour Congress (TLC), was able to lock up all of Edmonton's Big Three packing plants within six months.[23] This suggests that support for the union did not come from the grassroots. Former UPWA activist Alex Goruk said many suspected that the union achieved success by securing "a sweetheart deal" with the companies.[24] Once established, workers found that Local 78's officers did not aggressively promote the goals of a national union and centralized bargaining, which local workers had identified as priorities after the 1937 strike. The union also rejected party politics, which many union activists saw as essential to secure and enforce progressive labour legislation. In addition, the national office expected the local to operate independently, and did not support its internal development with financial resources and leadership training.[25] Finally, the union emphasized "cooperation" with the company, refusing to take up most worker grievances and quashing job actions.[26]

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[23] Hampson, Interview Transcript; Montague, "Trade Unionism". 99
[24] Goruk, Interview Transcript.
[25] Montague, "Trade Unionism". 157. An international office directive insisted that affiliated locals not get involved in politics.
[26] Hampson, Interview Transcript; Jamha, Interview Transcript.

Growing dissatisfaction with Local 78 among the rank and file at Burns -- the smallest of the Big Three packinghouses in the city -- made its workers the first to abandon the craft union for UPWA in 1943. As an industrial union, UPWA offered a more inclusive, democratic, egalitarian, and activist vision of unionism that was an explicit rejection of the more narrowly conceived business unionism of craft unions like the Butchers and Meatcutters' Local 78. UPWA originated in Chicago-area packinghouses as part of a broad movement of industrial unionism that developed in the 1930s in the wake of progressive New Deal labour legislation. It held particular appeal for workers in the manufacturing sector who were hit hard by deskilling in large-scale mass production operations. The goal of many industrial unionists was to align the labour movement with other progressive community groups to pressure governments to legislate a strong social welfare system. This would protect working-class families from the vicissitudes of the capitalist economy by providing a decent standard of living for all members of society, not just unionized workers.[27] In the United States some industrial trade unionists advocated the creation of national political bodies that would mediate labour relations and give labour a seat alongside business and the state in decision-making bodies that set prices, wages, and major policy directions.

UPWA's organizational expression and goals were shaped largely by the nature of the meatpacking industry and the history, structure, and demographics of packing unionism. The industry's tight profit margins made packing companies particularly resistant to centralized collective bargaining, which posed a major threat to management control. Within the labour movement, American packing workers rejected the heavy-handed and undemocratic leadership style of its central organizing body, the Committee of Industrial

[27] Deslippe, "Rights Not Roses". 17

Organizations (CIO), which they felt limited workers' ability to fight for centralized bargaining. When creating the international union, American packinghouse unionists tried to balance their need for effective centralized leadership with democratic processes that gave ordinary workers real input and control. As a result, UPWA developed in the United States as a highly decentralized structure of locals and districts that had considerable autonomy with built-in democratic processes to ensure that the union's membership remained in control of the organization.[28] To strengthen district cohesion packinghouse locals were grouped in ways that reflected commonalities in their regional identity, and plant processes. Each district shared a common newsletter and members met at their own annual conference.[29] The American section of the union was able to secure national bargaining with its Big Four meatpacking companies shortly after forming in 1943, which became an inspiration for the Canadian district when it was created later that year.[30] UPWA's decentralized structure gave the Canadian district considerable autonomy within the union, and allowed it to evolve in distinctive ways that reflected the country's politics and demographics.

In Edmonton packinghouses the strong presence of a craft union made the struggle to establish industrial unionism in the closing years of the war especially difficult. One effective recruitment strategy used by UPWA's brand new Burns local was the aggressive pursuit of equal pay for women, which appealed to male workers concerned about being displaced by cheap female labour and to the growing number of packing women who

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[28] UPWA's international executive board of four officers was selected at a constitutional convention and the director of each region was elected by the locals in that region. Horowitz, *Negro and White*. 136-141

[29] Deslippe, "Rights Not Roses". 105-106

[30] Canadian workers comprised roughly ten per cent of the international union's membership from the 1940s to the 1970s.

resented being paid less than a man when performing the same job.[31] Local 78 also filed an equal pay grievance, but as we will see in Chapter Seven, differences in the nature, approach, and outcome of each union's case suggest that the issue was a more successful recruiting strategy for UPWA than for the craft union. Although an equal pay grievance filed with the Regional War Labour Board was not decided until after locals were certified in the Canada Packers and Swift plants, UPWA was able to attract broad support from women, based on a photograph of workers who posed by the ballot box after the Canada Packers local was certified in 1944. **[Figure 10]**

During the war management and government bolstered Local 78's efforts to obstruct UPWA organizers as they strove to win the city's two largest packinghouses in a high stakes contest for worker votes. In 1944 Edmonton's Canada Packers plant became the prize jewel for both the craft and the industrial union because it belonged to the largest packing company in the country and was the only Canada Packers plant not unionized by UPWA outside Quebec. This made it the pivotal Canadian packinghouse for Local 78 to hang onto and for UPWA to win as a means of securing a national contract with the trend-setting Canada Packers. These structural factors intensified interventions by Canada Packers management and provincial government officials.[32] Alberta's more stringent voting regulations made it

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[31] Montague, "Trade Unionism". 143-145; "Pay by Efficiency to Women O.K.'d," *Edmonton Journal*, 10 July; "City Packing Plant Strike Not Settled, Equal Pay for Women May Cause New Issue," *Edmonton Journal*, 3 August.

[32] Canada Packers president J.S. McLean acknowledged after the vote that "if pressed" he favoured the existing union, but was legally unable to recognize either one after Alberta's Attorney General ruled that neither union had collective bargaining rights in the plant. A few weeks later the provincial Department of Labour set a date for a second vote with very short notice, triggering a protest from UPWA officials who successfully negotiated a six-day postponement on the condition that if they lost, the union would withdraw from the plant for at least a year. UPWA's complaints about "irregularities" in the second vote allowed the union to continue its organizing activities. For example, stewards of Local 78 tried to exercise

difficult for the nascent industrial union to achieve success in the local Canada Packers plant.[33] The result was a long and difficult struggle between Local 78 and UPWA organizers at Canada Packers that forced four government certification votes in 1944 within nine months. After the victory at Canada Packers, UPWA continued to encounter stiff opposition from Local 78 members as they organized the local Swift plant.[34] As we will see, the TLC union's forceful presence in Edmonton packinghouses during the war left a legacy of intense factionalism over competing visions of unionism in the postwar era.

Between 1944 and 1947 Edmonton packing workers strongly supported a bold series of strikes and near-strikes that helped the Canadian district of UPWA establish centralized bargaining. The union's national leadership took a first step in October 1944 by winning rank and file support for a government-imposed national settlement that set aside issues of wages and hours of work to secure common plant expiry dates and maintenance of membership.[35] In 1945 the Canada Packers wildcat strike that started in Toronto was pivotal in demonstrating the solidarity and militancy of Canadian packinghouse workers, which gave the union valuable leverage. All 600 workers at the Canada Packers plant in Edmonton walked out in sympathy during the five-day strike, which spread to every other Canada

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"influence" in departments where they were foremen, and Local 78 set up a sound truck across the street from the plant and broadcast throughout the vote. ———, "Trade Unionism". 141-152

[33] Under Alberta's Labour Act UPWA had to win a majority of all potential votes at a meeting, not just a majority of the votes cast, to be certified. Alberta law also required that more than fifty per cent of the workforce be present at a meeting to certify a union and that fifty-one per cent of the workforce vote for a union, not just fifty-one per cent of those who attended a certification meeting. According to John Tait Montague, the only other jurisdiction in North America with this kind of law was the State of Utah. *Ibid.* 146

[34] Goruk, Interview Transcript. Workers at Gainer's, the small independent packinghouse on Edmonton's south side, were the last to certify as a UPWA local in 1945. There is no evidence of controversy over this certification, likely because all of the city's Big Three packing workers had already signed up with UPWA. John Lenglet, "Organizer's Report of New Local Union, Gainers Local 319," (1945).

[35] Montague, "Trade Unionism"; Craig, "The Consequences of Provincial Jurisdiction".

Packers plant in the country. Workers at Edmonton's three other packinghouses were poised to walk out in sympathy when the strike ended.[36]

UPWA's growing national reputation for solidarity, and disciplined militancy was cemented in 1947 when workers in all of the Big Three meatpacking companies and many independents walked out in a two-month illegal strike aimed at making wages part of national bargaining.[37] In Edmonton three packinghouses shut down completely during the 1947 strike, and at the Swift plant, which tried to operate on a limited basis, only five workers out of more than 500, crossed the picket line. The threat to Canada's supply of meat to war-devastated Britain and Europe forced the federal government to intervene, despite provincial government resistance, because responsibility for labour relations had been returned to the provinces after the war. As national union leaders had hoped, federal intervention ultimately forced each of the Big Three packing companies into accepting separate, but national, master wage agreements patterned after the first company to secure an agreement. The solidarity and militancy of Edmonton packing workers played a vital role in establishing this informal national system of pattern bargaining and maintaining it until 1984.[38]

The Era of National Pattern Bargaining

Solidarity, Militancy, and Progressive Unionism, 1947-1965

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[36] Dave Archer, "General Strike in Canada," *The Packinghouse Worker*, August 31 1945.

[37] The strike began during Swift negotiations and expanded to include Canada Packers and Burns when their negotiations broke down a few weeks later.

[38] UPWA's goal of achieving one master contract for all Big Three companies was never realized, but the 1947 contract gave workers a significant wage increase that reduced the wage differential between regions. Most importantly, it secured the Rand formula for maintenance of membership, among other things. The government conciliator used the Swift settlement as a model for Canada Packers and Burns, establishing the system of pattern bargaining that had been developing since 1944. Craig, "The Consequences of Provincial Jurisdiction". Chapter VII

National pattern bargaining in the Canadian meatpacking industry was a product of the Postwar Compromise, which saw labour concede the right to strike during the life of a contract in exchange for legislated union recognition and the right to bargain collectively. The Rand Formula resulting from a pivotal 1945 Ford strike in Windsor also gave workers the automatic dues checkoff, which reinforced the Postwar Compromise by establishing the financial security of unions. The result was a complex and highly legalistic labour relations framework that included contract negotiations, a grievance system, and labour boards to settle disputes. Much of the solidarity and militancy among Edmonton packing workers that helped establish national pattern bargaining was sustained in the immediate postwar years, but with important differences between the city's four locals. Structural factors, ideology, and strong personalities all helped shape the way each local responded to the new postwar environment of strong unionism. In some packinghouse locals UPWA's progressive agenda of labour movement activism and political engagement was a major source of division and discord. Factors like a plant's age, size, location, management style, and shop floor culture help to explain these differences.

Swift Local 280 was the largest Edmonton packing local and the only local dealing with the fall-out from the company's attempt to continue operating during the 1947 strike. The high turnover rate that resulted -- Swift was forced to hire 500 new employees following the strike -- initially made it more challenging for the local to win support from new workers.[39] In addition, the company's ability to keep the three strikebreakers on its payroll, despite a wildcat walk-out and union grievance that went to arbitration, meant that the Swift

[39] Hampson, "Alberta Staff Reports, Locals 233-422." General Reports, 25 November 1947. Bill P., Interview (Edmonton: 2004).

local was plagued by tense relations among some workers. Two of the strikebreakers remained on the job for twenty years, and some union members never forgot or forgave them for the betrayal.[40] Dealing with a particularly anti-union and uncooperative American-based company that used its extra layer of bureaucracy in Chicago to delay and obstruct when dealing with Canadian workers' grievances, also made it more difficult for the Swift local to demonstrate its effectiveness and build worker loyalty.

Those at the Swift plant loyal to the former craft union, Local 78, continued to resist a number of progressive policies, particularly political action. In 1949 the local was led by a president who, with a core group of supporters, arbitrarily and undemocratically reduced the local's per capita for the union's city-wide council by eighty per cent. One of the union council's main purposes was to promote the development of an effective political action committee in each Alberta packing local. Two years later the local turned down a proposal for a one-cent per-capita education fund and refused to send a delegate to a union education school in Red Deer.[41] Although it was the largest local in the city, the Swift membership remained ambivalent about using union dues to fund a more influential role for the local. In 1963, after a per capita tax earmarked for education and political action was finally approved by the membership, a petition opposing it was able to collect 118 signatures.[42]

In comparison, Gainer Local 319 represented workers in the city's oldest but smallest and most remote packinghouse situated on the other side of the North Saskatchewan River, ten kilometres south-west of the packing district. Its physical isolation greatly limited day-to-

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[40] Westacott and Westacott, Interview.
[41] Hampson, "Alberta Staff Reports, Locals 233-511." 18 June 1951.
[42] ———, "Alberta Staff Reports, Locals 243-363 " (LAC, CFAW fonds, MG 28 I-186, PWOC and UPWA series, Vol 24, 1955-63). Local 280, 24 March 1963.

day interaction with unionists at the Big Three packinghouses located within a block of each other at the heart of the packing district. Also, employed by a local family-owned company with a long history in the community dating back to the turn of the century, Gainer unionists had to deal with a highly paternalistic management style that featured considerable personal influence, which tended to reduce class consciousness. In the years immediately after the 1947 strike Alberta UPWA representative Jack Hampson expressed concern about "lack of interest on the part of [the Gainer] local in selling the union to new employees" once the compulsory check-off of union dues came into effect.[43] It took seven years and considerable prompting and guidance from Hampson for the local to negotiate a pension plan – something other locals established much earlier.[44] Even on basic wage issues Hampson said the Gainer local lagged. In 1957 he reported to the national union office that, "through the years, Local 319 has failed to do an aggressive job" to bring Gainer wages up to the level of Canada Packers.[45]

The local's position representing the workers of an independent company outside the Big Three may also have compromised the militancy of its membership by making Gainer negotiators largely passive bystanders at national negotiations that set the wage pattern for the industry. In this local ideas like union education, political activism, and egalitarianism took hold less readily than in some plants and were often a source of conflict. In 1961 president of the local, Clifford Cummings, planned to roll out a Political Action Committee in support of the nascent NDP, although the initiative was nearly "scuttled" by the "Butler

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[43] ———, "Alberta Staff Reports, Locals 233-422." Local 319, 11 March 1948.
[44] ———, "Alberta Staff Reports, Locals 243-363 ". Local 319, 24 November 1957.
[45] *Ibid.* Local 319, 18 March 1956.

gang," according to Jack Hampson, for reasons that are not clear.[46] By 1964, however, Hampson reported that an "anti-Cummings group (NDPers)" defeated Cummings' choice for Financial Secretary.[47] This suggests that Cummings and his supporters were not genuinely committed to the NDP. Evidence that Cummings was willing to forgo dues from non-union members reinforces the impression that he and his supporters did not value highly the larger international union and its political activism.[48]

Canada Packers Local 243 represented workers in the newest local packinghouse, which gained many workers from the heavily organized Alberta coal industry who were seasoned unionists and others whose Depression experience made them resistant to company paternalism. Canada Packers was also by far the largest, most innovative, and influential packing company in the country, which made its Edmonton unionists acutely aware of emerging threats to worker power and the need for a strong union. Even though the local Swift plant was bigger, Canada Packers workers were usually the first in the city and among the first in the country to face job losses and increased worker control on the shop floor because of technological changes. Since the union usually targeted Canada Packers to set the "key" contract, its union leaders also gained the most experience with tough negotiations. As a result, the Canada Packers local in Edmonton often took the lead on work-process grievances and tended to have the most committed and activist union leaders. It also meant there was considerable interest within the local for an ambitious program of worker

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[46] Jack Hampson, 1944-59. Local 319, 4 June 1961.
[47] ———, "Alberta Staff Reports, Locals 243-1145," (LAC, CFAW fonds, MG 28 I-186, PWOC and UPWA series, Vol 24, 1964-67). Local 319, 26 January 1964.
[48] Jack Hampson, 4 March 1954, LAC, CFAW fonds, MG 28 I-186, PWOC and UPWA series, Vol 20, Local 319 Gainers.

education, strike donations, and active participation in labour organizations. In 1953 workers at Canada Packers Local 243 authorized a per capita education contribution of fifteen cents, which was much higher than the rate at any of the other Edmonton locals, to embark on an extensive education program that included weekend schools attended by other locals in the city. The Canada Packers local used this money to offer courses on topics like how to build a credit union, developing a mutual benefit organization, and the history of the trade union movement, as well as more traditional courses on being a steward and understanding the contract.[49] In addition to its education program, Local 243 achieved a high profile within UPWA by submitting progressive resolutions at national and international conventions aimed at developing a strong political action program that included fielding candidates from the local in municipal and provincial elections.[50]

Burns Local 233 was distinctive among the Big Three locals in Edmonton for being the first to swing over to the CIO during the war, which meant it was spared the vicious TLC/CIO infighting that created deep divisions among workers at Canada Packers and particularly at the Swift plant. As the first UPWA local in the city Burns also had some of the most experienced industrial unionists, like organizer John Lenglet, who was quickly appointed national research director for the union in Toronto, and Ethel Wilson, the local's

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[49] ———, "Alberta Staff Reports, Locals 233-511." Local 243, 9 April 1953.

[50] At UPWA's 1948 Canadian District convention , resolutions for two union education centres -- one in the east and one in the west -- as well as a resolution endorsing the CCF as the political arm of UPWA and the CLC, were submitted by Local 243 and carried. The second resolution also called for all Canadian UPWA locals to create a Political Action Committee aimed at running candidates in local elections. "UPWA District 10 Convention Report," (LAC, CFAW fonds, MG 28 I-186, PWOC and UPWA series, Vol 5). In 1959 a Local 243 resolution for UPWA to support the creation of a New Party (later the New Democratic Party) carried at the Canadian District convention. "Officers' Report " (presented at the UPWA District 8 Canadian Conference, November). A more detailed resolution for national office leadership in support of a strong education and political action program carried at the 1963 Canadian District Convention. "UPWA District 8 Convention". The small housing co-operative developed by twenty active members of the Canada Packers Local in Edmonton during the early 1950s is further evidence of this feeling. Alex Goruk, *Canadian Packinghouse Worker*, August 1952.

vice president, who played a pivotal role in the crucial 1947 strike meeting with the provincial government. As we will see in Chapter Six, Ethel Wilson's advocacy for women workers helped strengthen the local's progressive impulse. Nonetheless, an internal division between conservatives and progressives also disrupted the solidarity of the Burns local numerous times.

As the opening scene for this study revealed, in 1947 supporters of two skilled workers, Bill Chrapko and John (Scotty) Ferguson, disrupted union meetings to take control from a group led by Ethel Wilson, who was strongly committed to the labour movement and political activism as key vehicles for achieving goals like greater wage equality.[51] The Chrapko-Ferguson faction took a narrow view of unionism focused on contract bargaining and had little interest in building a labour movement, or in electoral politics. At the meeting where Ethel Wilson and the chief steward were sidelined, the group was able to postpone a strike donation to a Swift local in Saskatchewan during a crucial stage of negotiations just before the 1947 strike began. Ferguson insisted that the national office reimburse him for a minor bill he incurred attending a UPWA convention before the local could send its strike donation.[52] Chrapko's two-year tenure as president disrupted the local's commitment to progressive unionism in the immediate postwar years. At one point during his leadership the local refused to send any executive officers as delegates to an important labour movement conference because the executive felt "complete indifference" toward Jack Hampson and the union's national office.[53] Chrapko's weak commitment to the collective well-being of his union local was demonstrated when management removed him from his job because he did

[51] Hampson, "Alberta Staff Reports, Locals 233-422." Local 233, 11 August 1947.
[52] *Ibid.* Local 233, 11 August 1947.
[53] *Ibid.* General Report, 12 January 1949.

not perform adequately -- he suddenly quit the company but did not tell any union officials, leaving union leaders scrambling to sort out what had happened to their president.[54]

Despite these internal divisions the system of national pattern bargaining and the decentralized structure of the international union helped to sustain solidarity and militancy among Edmonton packing workers and between them and other packing workers across the country. Negotiations with each of the major packing companies were conducted by a national committee made up of delegates elected by locals across the country. These negotiating committees fostered cooperation within the chain of plants in a company, which made them "a critically important channel for union democracy" that strengthened the power and influence of the rank and file in dealing with day-to-day grievances on the shop floor between negotiations.[55] Grassroots influence made UPWA negotiators careful to reject contract clauses that could prevent union stewards from resolving grievances on the shop floor where the rank and file could more easily use informal practices to apply economic pressure in negotiations with a foreman. Segmentation of the workplace into quite physically separate departments enhanced the development of an extensive and powerful network of deeply committed shop stewards.[56] These structural features fostered cohesion and militancy locally and throughout the international union, which helped the packing union sustain its insurgent spirit more than many industrial unions, particularly the United Auto Workers (UAW).[57]

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[54] *Ibid.* General Report, 10 May 1949.
[55] Horowitz, *Negro and White.*
[56] *Ibid.* 207
[57] The fact that two of the country's Big Three packing companies were Canadian-owned, however, limited the kind of cross-border pressure from management in support of unionization to avoid Canadian sympathy strikes, which helped organizers of the Canadian automobile industry during the war. See Wells, "Origins of Canada's Wagner Model."

The union leadership's handling of the anticommunist purges that weakened the labour movement in the midst of an escalating Cold War, also helped sustain solidarity and militancy at the local level. UPWA's international executive decided to comply formally with the American Taft-Hartley Act (1947), which forced American unions to remove Communists from leadership positions, but continued to employ key Communist leaders.[58] In the same way the Canadian district's emphasis on democratic processes accommodated some political diversity. In 1948 UPWA's Canadian district "unanimously" voted to endorse the social democratic Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) as the political arm of the union, yet in a crucial 1949 vote to expel leftist unions in the Canadian Congress of Labour (CCL), UPWA's national director, Fred Dowling, allowed UPWA's delegates to vote according to their conscience.[59] In Edmonton, ideological tolerance made it possible for Communists, who played an important organizing role in the Canada Packers local, to remain

[58] Herb March, a Communist director of the important Chicago district of the union, resigned voluntarily in 1948 when the union's constitution prevented him from being removed from his position democratically, to avoid both the union's expulsion and a bitter internal split. March continued to play an important role in the union as an organizer and leader of its expanded anti-discrimination campaign. Rick Halpern and Roger Horowitz, "Herb March Obituary," 4 March 2002. Horowitz, *Negro and White*. 203

[59] *Packinghouse Worker*. 11 June 1948. Historian Irving Abella has described Dowling as a "militant anti-Communist" within the CCL because he was appointed to the CCL committee struck to assess the appeal by the United Electrical Workers (UE) after they had been threatened with expulsion in 1949 because of Communist influence. But Jack Hampson, who worked closely with Dowling, described UE's president Clarence Jackson as a good friend of the UPWA director, and Dowling consistently took a more moderate stance in decisions related to Communists within the labour movement. Abella notes that Dowling was among members of the committee who "did not feel that the entire union should be disciplined," and abstained from a vote on the penalty recommended by the committee because Dowling felt it was "too severe." Abella, *Nationalism, Communism*. 151-2. Halpern and Horowitz, "Obituary." Dowling has been described by Roger Horowitz as a social democrat who often allied with a left-centre bloc within the union's international leadership and was notable for his reluctance to expel capable and dedicated American UPWA leaders like Communist Herbert March. Horowitz, *Negro and White*. 140, 177-189. A former Canadian staffer also said that Dowling exerted a leftist influence more generally as the Canadian director who was automatically a vice president of the international union. Giles Endicott, Telephone Interview (2006).

active during the immediate postwar period, despite a provincial political climate that was particularly hostile toward Communists.[60]

UPWA's progressive goal of reducing inequities among workers found fairly strong support in both countries, although with important regional differences. Many industrial unions quickly abandoned collectivist and egalitarian ideals amidst the anti-communist hysteria that put labour on the defensive during the Cold War that followed World War Two. Anxious to preserve the legitimacy they enjoyed under new labour legislation that forced employers to recognize unions and bargain collectively, many union leaders toned down militancy about ideas that could be construed as communist. UPWA's more sustained social unionism, with its unique effort to combat racism in the community as well as the workplace, was shaped largely by the union's decentralized structure and racial configuration in the U.S. UPWA executives launched a far-reaching anti-discrimination campaign during the 1940s and 50s in response to grassroots pressure from Chicago-area locals where African-American workers comprised more than fifty per cent of the workforce. Constitutionally, the international office could use persuasion, not coercion, to implement resolutions democratically approved at international conventions, which made union education the key to winning worker support for progressive ideas like racial desegregation and gender equality.

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[60] Alex Goruk, who helped organize UPWA's Canada Packers local, said almost all of the founding members were either Communist or "pink." He used the term "pink" to describe those who were Communist "supporters" not "party members." Goruk, Interview Transcript. In 1951 Communists at Canada Packers published a newsletter aligning themselves with the Labour Progressive Party (the Communist Party's latest incarnation in Canada at the time) rather than the CCF, to the dismay of national and international UPWA leaders. In a memo to the international UPWA president, Canadian UPWA director Fred Dowling raised concerns about Communist activity within Toronto and Edmonton locals of Canada Packers. There is no evidence that international or national union officials took direct action against the local's Communist activists, but there is also no further evidence of their existence. A.T. Stephens, 11 May 1951.

In Edmonton packinghouses there is only one clear instance where ethnicity influenced the election of a local leader. In 1956 Ted Formanski, a German-Canadian who had been president of the Swift local since 1953, was defeated "decisively" by Ukrainian-Canadian Peter Uganecz. Jack Hampson said Formanski complained to him "that they used the nationality question and he is of German extraction and the vast majority of employees in the plant are Ukrainian, he feels that this was used against him."[61] In most locals Anglo-Canadian or Anglo-Saxon immigrants predominated in leadership positions during the early years, but by the 1950s those of East European extraction, particularly Ukrainian-Canadians, were often elected. For those perceived to be non-white, race was not an insurmountable barrier to union leadership because at least two men of African-American heritage were actively involved in the Swift local and were well respected in the roles of vice president, assistant chief steward, and as a member of the negotiating committee.[62] There were few non-white men within the packinghouses until the 1980s but it appears that their opportunities for leadership were not more restricted than those of Anglo and non-Anglo-Canadian workers seen as white.[63]

In 1947 UPWA's international convention passed a resolution asking every local to set up a special political action committee to fight for legislative protection against various forms of discrimination, including race. Although "sex" was not included in the list of rights that needed protection, following UPWA's 1947 convention a Women's Activities Committee formed to pressure the union to protect the equal rights of women on and off the

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[61] Hampson, "Alberta Staff Reports, Locals 243-363 ". Local 280, 22 January 1956.
[62] Swift Local 280, "Swift GMM Minutes."1976 Swift Collective Agreement. Ray Heslep and his father Robert Heslep were mentioned by a number of former Swift workers during oral interviews, as an example of African-Canadians who became involved in the union.
[63] Also, I was unable to interview a significant sample of people seen as non-white.

job through collective bargaining, legislation, and community activities. Galvanized by the race issue, African-American women spear-headed gender activism within the union. In the United States racial desegregation of packinghouses and the union's early role in the civil rights movement were among the union's most notable achievements, for example, giving African American packing women access to some of the cleanest packing jobs for the first time, and women more generally equal pay by 1957.[64] Yet in areas like the American Midwest, where African-Americans were few, or some parts of the South, where racist attitudes and practices were most deeply rooted, there was strong resistance to the international union's antiracism agenda, and its strategy of using education to promote principles of equality and tolerance had little impact.[65]

The Canadian district included a nondiscrimination clause in its earliest war-time contracts, but the relative racial homogeneity of its membership meant that it did not have the same grassroots impetus for race and gender activism.[66] The pressure for change came mainly from the international and national leadership, not local union leaders. In some locals neither an anti-discrimination nor a women's committee was ever established.[67] Limited

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[64] In Chicago UPWA activists held a lunch counter sit-in at a department store near the stockyards when black UPWA members were refused service, which ended the policy locally. Horowitz, *Negro and White*. 224. See also, Deslippe, *Rights Not Roses*.

[65] The proportion of women, particularly African-American women, strongly influenced the ability of women workers to have a voice and to fight discriminatory policies within individual locals. At the Morrell plant in Ottumwa, Iowa, where there were only a handful of African-American workers, and women represented only fourteen percent of the workforce compared to a union average of twenty percent, the international executive "became disgusted" by the local's refusal to develop an anti-discrimination and civil rights program during the 1950s. Wilson, *Struggling with Iowa's Pride*. 75-77.

[66] Swift Canadian Co. Ltd. and UFCW, "Swift Local 280 Collective Agreements 1943-1982," (UFCW Local 1118 in Edmonton; the National Office in Rexdale, Ontario).

[67] The international office expressed concern when a Medicine Hat, AB local received eighty-five per cent support from its membership to amend their constitution in 1964 so that an anti-discrimination committee was not required. They argued that the "membership feels that this [civil rights] committee referrs [sic] to Local in U.S.A. and not in Canada as a rule...none of the women in either plant ever attend any of the

constitutionally, the national office organized labour school courses in the 1950s on racial, religious, and sex discrimination and published national newsletter articles on discriminatory attitudes toward new immigrants.[68] Nevertheless, two separate incidents in the early postwar years suggest that the Canadian office was slow to follow up on incidents of racial discrimination.[69] The main area of activism was the union's increasing accommodation of its French-Canadian membership by the late 1950s, which comprised as much as eighty per cent of some Quebec locals.[70]

In Edmonton there was one clear instance of anti-racism activism by a local UPWA leader toward the end of the war. Burns union leader John Lenglet, as secretary of Edmonton Labor Council, wrote the mayor about a new labour council resolution condemning the local King Edward Hotel's refusal to serve a "young Chinese of Edmonton" and a "Negro citizen from Halifax" on two separate occasions.[71] Claiming "It was a shock to hear that such conditions do exist in this city," Lenglet urged the city to suspend the hotel's license until

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meetings."James R. Driscoll, "Letter," (Madison, WI.: WHS, 1964); G.R. Hathawa, "Letter," (Madison, WI.: WHS, 1964).

[68] "Immigration and Employment Problem," *Canadian Packinghouse Worker*, November 1959.

[69] The first case involved the Ritz-Carlton hotel in Montréal, which refused service to an African-American delegate attending a 1946 UPWA conference held in the city. Ralph Helstein, 17 February 1947. The second case involved an Ontario-based fishing outfitter from Oklahoma who refused to provide boats and oars to African-American members of the UPWA fishing party. In the second case one of the international vice presidents sent a number of letters over a six-month period inquiring whether a Canadian officer tried to get the operator's license revoked. The union eventually abandoned this effort because the international office decided that there was no opportunity to conduct a second fishing trip with African-American union members to make an issue of any further discrimination. A.T. Stephens, 19 October 1953; Fred Dowling, October 22 1953; Dick, April 1 1954; A.T. Stephens, April 3 1954; Donna Hill, April 10 1954; A.T. Stephens, April 14 1954; ———, May 13 1954. WHS, UPWA, Mss 118, Box 430/10. These were the only national-level incidents of racial discrimination I came across.

[70] UPWA began publishing national newsletter articles in French by 1957 and was one of the first Canadian unions to make French an official language of the union, eventually providing French translations of Quebec contracts. Huguette Plamondon, Interview (2006). A study involving interviews with rank and file Francophone workers in Quebec packinghouses would expand our understanding of just how progressive UPWA seemed to them.

[71] R.G.M. Rowan and John Lenglet letters, 26 April 1945 (EMA, RG11 Class 66, File 62, Edmonton Labour Council). John Lenglet became UPWA's National Research Director and moved to Toronto shortly after this.

they guaranteed nondiscriminatory service.[72] The fact that this kind of activism was not sustained in the postwar era, reinforces the impression that it was largely a top-down directive that did not align well with the priorities of rank and file Edmonton packing workers.

A later incident of ethnic harassment indicates that at the local level union leadership concerns about union strength could trump the problem of ethnic discrimination. In 1960 UPWA's Alberta representative, Jack Hampson, reported "a bit of friction" over "discriminatory" and "anti-semitic" behaviour at Edmonton's Gainer's plant instigated by a German worker who drew a swastika on the wall of the Pickle Cellar. The company's decision to suspend the perpetrator for seven days, which Hampson supported, triggered a subsequent incident in which a Ukrainian on the killing floor called three German co-workers "Nazi S.O.B.'s" and, after telling them to go home to Germany, mocked them with a Hitler salute. After the second incident Hampson felt the union should discourage the company from suspending the Ukrainian because "uncomplimentary remarks" were quite common between packinghouse workers and a second suspension might instigate more incidents.[73] Hampson's comment that this kind of incident occurred frequently, together with his decision to view the second incident less severely, suggests that the union's leadership was more concerned about reducing the risk of worker suspensions than about stamping out discriminatory treatment in an environment where the behaviour was endemic.

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[72] The city wrote the local hotel about a bylaw requirement that they serve any person, but the hotel's response is unknown. John Lenglet, "Letter," (EMA, RG11 Class 66, File 62, 1945 Edmonton Labor Council
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[73] Hampson, "Alberta Staff Reports, Locals 243-363 ". Local 319, 14 February 1960.

The Canadian district had a mixed record on gender activism that differed from the American context in a few significant ways. Canada's national executives actively supported the retention of women who married in the immediate postwar period when companies tried to lay them off, and advocated a single seniority list to protect women workers from layoff, something for which American women workers had to fight much longer.[74] Women were also placed in key national staff positions. Huguette Plamondon left her job as secretary for Quebec's UPWA Council in 1953 to become an international staff representative in Quebec, then was elected president of the Montréal Labor Council, and in 1956 became the first Canadian woman to lead a major labour organization when she was elected vice president of the newly merged Canadian Labour Congress, a position she held for more than twenty years.[75] Women also held staff positions as newsletter editor, assistant research director and district secretary, which they used to develop a women's program within the union, although no Canadian woman held an executive position within UPWA or its successor, Canadian Food and Allied Workers (CFAW).[76]

The proportion of women workers in the Canadian district was about the same as in the U.S. – twenty per cent – but if there were any women seen as non-white in Canadian

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[74] Fred Dowling, 26 April 1949. Roger Horowitz states that it took a decade of struggle after the war for American women to secure a single seniority list in their master contracts. Horowitz, *Negro and White.*

[75] Later Plamondon became a vice president of UFCW, which was formed by the merger of CFAW with the Retail Clerks Union in 1979. Tom Killen, "Huguette Plamondon First Woman Appointed UPWA Field Rep.," *Canadian Packinghouse Worker*, March 1953. http://www.ufcw.ca/Theme/UFCW/files/PDF2006/Trailblazers%20and%20Sisters.pdf

[76] District Secretary Iona Samis, in particular, played a vital role as a feminist labour activist who organized union schools for many years on issues of importance to working women for the Toronto Labour Council, the Ontario Federation of Labour, and the New Democratic Party, as well as UPWA's Ontario Council, In 1967 Samis was elected Vice President of the Ontario Federation of Labour and was the liaison officer for its Women's Committee. In 1974 she left the union to accept an appointment to the newly created Ontario Status of Women Council. "Kitchener Area Locals Attend One-Day School," *Canadian Packinghouse Worker*, December; "Members and Staff Active, Many Lead the Way in '66," *Canadian Packinghouse Worker*, January; "Iona Samis Appointed to Women's Council," *Butcher Workman*, January.

locals they were too few to develop the kind of highly motivated and militant leadership on women's issues that African-American women achieved in the U.S. The gendered wage differential in Canadian master contracts was not eliminated until 1971, compared to 1957 in the U.S., although in both countries gendered job segregation made equal pay largely a moot point.[77] Canada's huge geographic expanse, small membership base, and the union's male-dominated culture did not allow the allocation of scarce funds for union women to gather physically, which limited the broader influence of women in Toronto and Winnipeg, who were most active. Legislatively the activism of UPWA women was fractured along provincial lines because of the way labour laws are structured.[78] Alberta was particularly "slow" to pass anti-discrimination legislation.[79] At the local level Edmonton's male-dominated union leadership promoted the union's agenda of equal treatment of women inconsistently, as we will see in Chapter Six.

UPWA was able to achieve significant contract gains under national pattern bargaining without striking between 1947 and 1966 because of the high levels of solidarity

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[77] "District Conference Hammers out '56 Contract Demands," Canadian Packinghouse Worker, May 1956. Swift Canadian Co. and Edmonton Local 280's 1957 collective agreement. Equal pay ranked as high as third on the union's list of negotiation priorities in some years but was dropped from the list entirely in other years with no apparent explanation for the union's inconsistency. See *Canadian Packinghouse Worker* 1952-1969.

[78] It was not until the Charter of Rights was added to the Canadian constitution in 1984 that women had an effective vehicle for filing a human rights grievance at the national level. 441. Winks, *The Blacks in Canada: A History*. 427-30. In comparison, the 1964 American Civil Rights Act applied across state borders. Deslippe, *Rights Not Roses*.

[79] Unlike most other provinces, Alberta did not pass separate legislation to enforce human rights in employment and accommodation in the 1950s. Alberta also lagged significantly in developing a Human Rights Commission in 1973, twelve years after Ontario, which, in 1961 was the first province to develop a Human Rights Code and Human Rights Commission. Maureen Riddell, *The Evolution of Human Rights Legislation in Alberta, 1945-1979*, ed. Alberta Human Resources and Employment (Edmonton: Alberta Government, 1979).

and militancy in packing locals across the country, including the four in Edmonton.[80] One compelling factor was the tremendous respect rank and file workers had for Canadian UPWA District Director Fred Dowling. Former Edmonton Canada Packers worker Roy Jamha explained in a 1977 interview that packinghouse workers "had more loyalty than they often had sense, but whatever Dowling said was the word of God." Jamha said management understood that Dowling could phone his three regional assistants and within twenty minutes every packing plant in the country would be shut down. Referring to the national strikes in the 1940s, and 1966, he said, "We proved it and it's never been anything else."[81]

The nature of the wage gains reveals broad-based support for reducing wage differences that the membership saw as inequitable. This progressive attitude began at top levels of the national union where district staff were paid modest salaries.[82] It was also evident in the Canadian membership's decision to subsidize smaller locals, whose members could not afford the extraordinary transportation and communication costs they incurred working in the largest district geographically. In the immediate postwar years Canadian packing workers used their negotiating power to significantly reduce job rate, skill-based, and geographic wage differentials. Although all Canadian meatpacking workers benefited as increases in the average industry wage exceeded increases in both the cost of living and the

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[80] Nevertheless, national negotiations went to conciliation in 1954, 1958, 1964 and 1966. Craig, "The Consequences of Provincial Jurisdiction". CFAW Local 243, "President's Notes." Letter 28 April 1969.

[81] Jamha, Interview Transcript.

[82] A 1953 comparison of the average weekly wage and salary in the food and beverage industry in Canada with the base male rate at the Swift plant in Edmonton and the salary range for national UPWA staff shows that most union staff earned a little less than double what workers at the male base rate earned, and that the base rate was very close to the average wage in the industry. This ratio was sustained until at least 1958. Swift Canadian Co. Ltd. and UFCW, "Swift Local 280 Collective Agreements 1943-1982; H. Grodeland, "Proceedings" (LAC, CFAW fonds, MG 28 I-186, PWOC and UPWA series, Vol 5, Regional Conference, Feb 17-18, Edmonton, 1945); F. H. Leacy, Kenneth A. H. Buckley, and M. C. Urquhart, eds., *Historical Statistics of Canada*, (Ottawa: Statistics Canada in joint sponsorship with the Social Science Federation of Canada, 1983); John Lenglet, "UPWA Canadian Staff Salaries and Pensions," (WHS, UPWA, Mss 118, Box 434/2); , *The Canadian Packinghouse Worker*. June 1958.

average manufacturing wage, initially the union demanded flat wage increases rather than percentage increases to raise the wages of the lowest paid workers the most because so many workers were at or near the minimum wage level during the war.[83] Between 1933 and 1952 the wage differential between the job rate for a highly skilled floorsman and a labourer was cut in half.[84] But there were limits to the notion of egalitarianism among some of the most skilled workers: Complaints from packing engineers in the 1950s, which culminated in Edmonton with a failed attempt by a group of Burns engineers to leave UPWA for another union, caused the union to reverse this trend by the late 1950s.[85]

The Canadian district also played a vital role in establishing the job rating system in the 1950s based on incremental "brackets" that ensured workers performing the same work in different plants received the same job rate.[86] UPWA was eventually able to eliminate a complex bonus system that preceded the union at Canada Packers and advantaged the fastest workers, despite considerable company opposition.[87] Finally, the Canadian district committed to eliminating any differences in wage rates between regions of the country, regardless of the cost of living. The gap between basic rates of pay at packing plants in Quebec or the Maritimes, and Toronto or Vancouver – with Prairie rates in between – steadily narrowed until they were finally eliminated in 1980.[88] These results demonstrate that

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[83] _____, "Wage Increase for Labourers Greater Than for Skilled," *Canadian Packinghouse Worker*, November 1953.
[84] The wage differential dropped from ninety-seven per cent to only fifty-five per cent during those years. Howard McDermott, " " (WHS Mss 118, Box 88, 1952 – District 10, Director F. Dowling., 1952).
[85] Hampson, "Alberta Staff Reports, Locals 233-511." Burns Local 233: 20 April 1953; 18 June 1953; 24 August 1954; 26 October 1954. Canada Packers Local 243, "Edmonton Area Engineers Wage Survey."
[86] During the war less than half of packing workers in Canada had been paid the proper rate for the work they were performing, often because the companies refused to post job rates. "Proceedings," (Montreal: LAC, CFAW fonds, MG 28 I-186, PWOC and UPWA series, Vol 5 District 10 Convention).
[87] *Frank and *Winnifred, Interview (Edmonton: 2004).
[88] MacLachlan, *Kill and Chill*. 243.

eliminating perceived wage inequities among workers was a priority within the Canadian union membership. Skilled workers and those living in the better paid regions of the country accepted smaller wage increases to protect their jobs from being moved to lower-waged areas of the country.

In Edmonton a display of solidarity and militancy at the Canada Packers and Burns plants in the immediate postwar years helped establish relatively harmonious labour relations, which seemed to enhance workers' gains at the local level in the 1950s. Initially union power was weakened by contraction of the meatpacking industry in the late 1940s, as war-related meat contracts dried up and a wartime moratorium on beef and hog exports to the U.S. ended in 1948, which opened the American market to producers.[89] This forced significant layoffs, particularly at the local Canada Packers plant in 1949. In 1952, however, demand surged because of foot and mouth disease in Saskatchewan, which closed off American exports, boosting the local supply of livestock.[90] In two wildcat incidents, workers at the Burns and Canada Packers plants used job actions amidst a glut of livestock to force management to address their grievances.[91] At Canada Packers workers in the Canning Department refused to show up for Saturday work until the grievances were addressed.[92] A month later Burns workers in Pork Cutting refused over-time on two separate occasions by walking off the job.[93] In both packinghouses the job actions were organized independently of

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[89] Report, 1953 (LAC CFAW fonds MG 28, I-186 PWOC and UPWA series, Vol 4 International Executive Board Minutes).
[90] John Lenglet and Leslie Jones, "Meat Packers Profits Rise -- Workers and Farmers Lose Out," *Canadian Packinghouse Worker*, June 1953.
[91] For more detail on the Canada Packers incident see Chapter Two. The incident is discussed again in Chapter Seven.
[92] Local 243 and Executive, "Report on Overtime Refusal," (Edmonton: LAC, CFAW fonds, MG 28 I-186, PWOC and UPWA series, Vol 20, Canada Packers Grievances, 1952). For more detail see Chapter Two.
[93] Hampson, "Alberta Staff Reports, Locals 233-511." 30 May 1952.

local union leaders, who were forced into the rearguard action of getting workers back on the job. This suggests that strong grassroots solidarity and militancy within the system of national pattern bargaining helped convince local management and union officials to find creative ways of accommodating their differences. This impression is reinforced by the fact that between 1952 and roughly 1960 there are fewer grievances that went to conciliation or arbitration in the archival records compared to the periods before and after these years.

By the 1960s both national and local union leaders were reporting a discernible shift in relations between management and the union. In the district's national newsletter Canadian director Fred Dowling noted that rising unemployment in 1960-61 had caused a "stiffening attitude" among all the packing companies, which resulted in more cases going to conciliation and to arbitration boards.[94] Two years later UPWA's national research director John Lenglet explained a reversal in attitudes toward management rights that was seriously eroding union power. Grievances that had often been decided in the early postwar years with the understanding that the company could not do something unless it was actually specified in the contract, were now viewed as pre-existing management rights unless the contract explicitly said otherwise. Arbitration boards helped establish this shift. He also stated that the traditional union strategy of direct actions like slowdowns, strikes, and refusing to work overtime, were less effective because of new technologies and an economic recession, which were generating higher unemployment.[95]

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[94] *Canadian Packinghouse Worker*, January, 1962.
[95]John Lenglet, "Making Contracts Creep for Bosses," *Canadian Packinghouse Worker*, February 1963.

The number of grievances, reprimands, and suspensions rose dramatically in the early 1960s at both the national and the local level.[96] In Edmonton most grievances coalesced around the issues of protecting union jobs through resistance to speedups, the downgrading of skill level, and safety concerns -- particularly with the implementation of new machinery. It was mandatory overtime and the hiring of casual labour, however, that became flash-points for workers in Edmonton packinghouses, in part because the provincial government refused to enforce its own labour legislation. These strategies by local packing companies to cut labour costs triggered considerable militancy. The Canada Packers local became vigilant in 1962 as news that the company was hiring part-timers outside the union travelled through the network of union stewards across the country. Edmonton's chief steward reported that unlike many other Canada Packers locals, the Edmonton local allowed no part-time workers to be hired from outside the bargaining unit. If the company tried this strategy in Edmonton, Harold Steele said, "we would immediately lay a charge under our grievance procedure and carry it to the limit."[97] In 1963 workers at the Gainer plant staged a showdown and five workers were fired for refusing to work overtime.[98] The Gainer local grieved the case through a lengthy arbitration board process.[99] The board chose to avoid an interpretive ruling about mandatory overtime in the contract, but determined that the company had been

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[96] Montreal was a national hotspot for the union with 82 grievances, 54 reprimands and 28 suspensions because of one slow-down. ———, "Re: Montréal Work Stoppage," (LAC, CFAW fonds, MG 28 I-186, accession 1984-0536, Box 11 Canada Packers grievances, 1963).

[97] ———, "Re: Casual Help in Canada Packers Locals," (LAC, CFAW fonds, MG 28 I-186, PWOC and UPWA series, Vol 22 Canada Packers Grievances, 1961).

[98] According to the Alberta staff representation, Gainer workers had more control over overtime than workers in any other local packinghouse. Hampson, "Alberta Staff Reports, Locals 243-363 ". Local 319, 11 May 1962.———, "Alberta Staff Reports, Locals 243-1145." 26 January 1964.

[99] The case became bogged down by a dispute over the impartiality of a company appointee to the board, and the union lost the case at the Supreme Court level in Alberta. (From clippings file, no date. LAC, CFAW fonds, MG 28 I-186, PWOC and UPWA series, Vol. 20, 319 Gainers 1954-1975)

excessive in dismissing the workers and reinstated the men without the seniority and pay they lost for the ten-month period before their reinstatement.[100] The case provoked worker militancy again at Gainer's early in 1965, resulting in a strike that was narrowly averted by the intervention of a national union official.[101]

By mid-1965 the attention of local packing workers was focused on the government's failure to enforce its provincial Hours of Work Act amidst the city's ongoing labour shortage, which allowed packing companies to demand excessive amounts of overtime. A province-wide petition in July well supported by packing workers triggered stronger enforcement, and the amount of overtime "tapered off" to the point where Edmonton's Burns local reported that an additional forty-four people had been hired.[102] But the victory was short-lived. By the end of August management at the Canada Packers plant had antagonized workers by hiring part-time calf skinners without "consulting" the union, and by scheduling "excessive overtime."[103] Workers demanded action from their leadership with the threat of a wildcat strike. Three local union representatives, including president Alex Goruk and staff representative Jack Hampson, met with the chair of Alberta's Board of Industrial Relations, Ken Pugh, to clarify how the Hours of Work Act applied to overtime in the meatpacking industry and to emphasize the threat of a wild-cat strike, but "Received no help from the Board," according to Edmonton's new staff representative, Peter Uganecz.[104] Less than a

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[100] Jack Hampson, " " (LAC, CFAW fonds, MG 28 I-186, accession 1984-0536, Box. 20, 319 Gainers 1954-1975, 6 February). 6 February and 8 September 1964.
[101] ———, "Alberta Staff Reports, Locals 243-1145." Local 319, 12 December 1964. Fred Dowling, (Edmonton: LAC, CFAW fonds, MG 28 I-186, accession 1984-0536, Box 20, 319 Gainers 1954-1975, 5 March 1965).
[102] Hampson, "Alberta Staff Reports, Locals 243-1145." General Report, 11 July 1965.
[103] Peter Uganecz, "Alberta Staff Reports, Locals 233-319," (LAC, CFAW fonds, MG 28 I-186, PWOC and UPWA series, Vol 24, 1964-67). Local 243, 15 September 1965.
[104] *Ibid.* Local 243, 27 August 1965.

week later the union president, Alex Goruk, was suspended for three days when the part-time calf skinners did not report for work and some of the overtime management assigned was not worked. The company claimed Goruk "interfered" with business operations.[105] Goruk's militancy was strongly backed by the membership who voted unanimously to pursue the case through arbitration.[106] Although there is no evidence of how this grievance was resolved, the events at Edmonton's Canada Packers plant illustrate rising class tensions in the country's trend-setting meatpacking company, which set the stage for a major national strike in 1966.

The development of highly contentious over time grievances in the 1960s reveals the pivotal role of Alberta's business-friendly Social Credit government and highlights the issue of political activism, which had been a central objective for many Edmonton packing workers dating back to the aftermath of the 1937 strike.[107] From their inception during World War Two, industrial unions promoted political activism as a more effective vehicle than job action for making working-class gains.[108] This objective was reflected in UPWA's 1948 affiliation with the CCF and further prompting at the Canadian district's 1955 convention for all UPWA members to become card-carrying CCF members.[109] At the local level Alberta staff representative Jack Hampson worked energetically to encourage the development of a well-funded Political Action Committee in every Edmonton packing local from the earliest postwar years. The Canada Packers local consistently took the lead in promoting both

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[105] *Ibid.* Local 243, 31 August 1965.
[106] *Ibid.* Summary of Reports, 7 September 1965.
[107] Alberta was a particularly difficult jurisdiction for unions going to arbitration. In 1962 Jack Hampson explained to Fred Dowling: "In this province we are having very bad experience on arbitration in respect to contracting out. As a matter of fact, several Unions have arbitrated and not one has won one." This provides an additional explanation for why there are relatively few arbitrations in Edmonton union records. Jack Hampson, "Alberta Staff Reports, Local 233," (Edmonton: LAC, CFAW fonds, MG 28 I-186, PWOC and UPWA series, Vol 25, 1956-63). 12 October 1962.
[108] Heron, *The Canadian Labour Movement.* 90.
[109] *The Packinghouse Worker* 11 June 1948.

political action and labour education, which helped make packing workers a "pillar" of Alberta's postwar labour movement after the coal industry went into decline.[110]

When the Canadian labour movement began mobilizing in the late 1950s to develop a new political party, the Canadian district of UPWA was heavily involved from the earliest stages. In 1961 Fred Dowling and another top UPWA staff man, Romeo Mathieu, became national vice presidents of the New Democratic Party (NDP) and Jack Hampson claimed optimistically that the union's political action committees and education institutes had converted some Conservatives and SoCreds who initially "firmly opposed our PAC program...but now have seen the light."[111] At its 1961 convention UPWA passed a resolution urging all locals to affiliate with the NDP and to make a monthly per capita contribution of five cents or a flat rate of one dollar per member annually. The UPWA joint council in Winnipeg unanimously endorsed this policy and a majority of UPWA members nationally were affiliated to the party in 1961.[112] Two years later in Edmonton all four locals were making donations in proportion to their size.[113]

There was a significant disjuncture, however, between the ideals of democratic process and political engagement promoted by the international union, and the way they played out at the local level. Some of the most debilitating internal factionalism and conflict in three of Edmonton's four meatpacking locals during the immediate postwar decades was fought over issues of democratic process and funding for union education, participation in the labour movement, and political activism. The strong residual presence of craft unionists in

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[110] Neil Reimer, Interview (Edmonton: 2004).
[111] Hampson, "Alberta Staff Reports, Local 233; UPWA, "District 8 Convention" (1961). 22 April 1961.
[112] ———, "Education Department Report," (Montreal: WHS UPWA Mss 118, Box 395, District 8, Canada, 1961).
[113] *Canadian Packinghouse Worker*, May 1963.

most Edmonton packing locals, particularly the Swift local, often disrupted local cohesion because these conservative unionists tended to prefer a politically neutral union. There were major differences between Canada Packers, which had the most politically committed union leadership, and all the other locals. While Edmonton's Canada Packers local approved a high monthly per-capita fee of fifteen cents in 1953 and embarked on an extensive education program that included weekend schools attended by other locals in the city, the Burns local approved a one-cent per capita payment for education and the Swift local turned down a proposal for even that much.[114] Ten years later when UPWA's provincial council approved a fee increase from three cents to fifteen cents, those in the Swift local unhappy with the increase were able to get 118 signatures on a petition opposing it.[115]

As we saw in the opening scene of this study, it was the issue of labour movement support that triggered the most internal conflict in the early years at the Burns local. In the 1950s there was conflict over the extravagant expenses of those who attended labour movement conferences, and the lack of transparency and due notice for meetings where delegates were selected.[116] Similar allegations of extravagance and an unfair selection process for local representation at labour conferences created bitter conflict in the Gainer local.[117] These incidents reveal significant internal dissension about UPWA's progressive agenda in three of Edmonton's four packing locals.

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[114] Hampson, "Alberta Staff Reports, Locals 233-511." Local 243, 9 April 1953; Local 233, 18 June 1951; Local 280, 18 June 1951.
[115] The resolution was approved. ———, "Alberta Staff Reports, Locals 243-363 ". Local 280, 24 March 1963.
[116] Alistair Stewart, (LAC, CFAW fonds, MG 28 I-186, accession 1984-0536, Box 20, Burns, 1955-1975, 1959).
[117] Alistair Stewart, (LAC, CFAW fonds, MG 28 I-186, accession 1984-0536, Box 20, Gainers 1954-1975, 1961).

The Canadian district's strong endorsement of the NDP in 1961 also generated a mixed response in Edmonton packinghouses. According to Jack Hampson, at the Burns plant Ethel Wilson, who had "great credibility" as a newly elected Social Credit member of the provincial legislature, backed a group within the local that circulated a petition in 1962 to disaffiliate from the NDP.[118] At Gainer's support for the new party was one of the most divisive issues in the local's 1963 election.[119] The controversy over increasing the local's education and political action committee funding from a paltry three cents to a more substantial fifteen cents suggests that support for a monthly political party contribution would have been limited.[120] In comparison, the Canada Packers local in Edmonton often played a leadership role on political activism and was able to pass a resolution in support of the new party organization at Alberta Federation of Labour's annual convention in 1961, making this packing local most supportive of the NDP in Edmonton.[121]

It is difficult to build a clear picture of support for the party in Edmonton packing locals during the 1960s, but issues raised in UPWA's national newsletter reveal two sources of conflict that alienated some Edmonton packing workers. In 1966, during the first month of the national Canada Packers strike, seven Edmonton packing workers authored a lengthy letter to the editor opposing what they saw as mandatory union membership and NDP dues.[122] The men proclaimed their support for the Christian Labour Association of Canada

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[118] Hampson, "Alberta Staff Reports, Local 233." 12 March 1961, 9 April 1961, 26 March 1962.
[119] ———, "Alberta Staff Reports, Locals 243-1145." Local 319, 26 January 1964.
[120] ———, "Alberta Staff Reports, Locals 243-363 ". Local 280, 24 March 1963.
[121] ———, "Alberta Staff Reports, Local 233." 31 October 1961.
[122] Workers were able to opt out of both union membership (although the dues were compulsory) and financial support for the NDP. In 1958 UPWA's membership of 3,500 in Alberta held a mock parliament, which voted unanimously to support the new party, including a per capital tax that members could opt out of. Robin Hunter, "Social Democracy in Alberta: From the CCF to the NDP," in *Essays in Honour of*

(CLAC), a labour union that advocated Christian social principles and rejected the undemocratic and adversarial practices of the mainstream Canadian labour movement. Their main complaint with their union and the labour movement more broadly was that it had become "too powerful" and threatened to become a "union dictatorship," but they also resented paying dues to a political party they did not choose to support. The letter, signed by five men from the highly activist Canada Packers local, and by two men from Swift, the city's largest packinghouse, suggests that the strike situation aggravated internal dissent about political activism.[123] Two years later an article on the proposal by an Ontario NDP member of the provincial legislature for legislation supporting a woman's right to therapeutic abortion sparked several letters of opposition.[124] Based on the appeal of CLAC and other Christian influences within Alberta's labour movement in the 1960s, it is likely that this issue further alienated some Edmonton packing workers from the party.[125]

The internal conflict over political activism in most Edmonton packing locals helps explain the union's limited impact on the political stage in both the city and the province between World War Two and the 1960s. As we saw in the opening pages of this study, Alberta staff representative Jack Hampson ran for a provincial seat in Edmonton in the 1948

Grant Notley: Socialism and Democracy in Alberta, ed. Larry Pratt (Edmonton: NeWest Publishers Ltd., 1986).75.

[123] The executive of the Canada Packers local in Edmonton wrote a strongly-worded reply asserting "we have no use for the CLAC." Although Canada Packers workers bore the brunt of the strike through wage losses, a resolution creating special strike fund contributions by UPWA members of Burns, Swift, and Gainer locals was approved by the national district to help fund the strike. "To the Editor," *Canadian Packinghouse Worker*, August. UPWA Executive Board Local 243, "To the Editor," *Canadian Packinghouse Worker*, October 1966.

[124] "Woman against Abortion," *Canadian Packinghouse Worker*, May; "Abortion: A Matter of Conscience," *Canadian Packinghouse Worker*, March; "A Letter," *Canadian Packinghouse Worker*, July; F.W. Dowling, "A Reply," *Canadian Packinghouse Worker*, July 1968.

[125] Alberta trade union activist Roy Jamha explained in a 1977 interview that in the mid-1960s there was concern about high profile provincial trade unionists allowing the Billy Graham Crusade to use their name for promotion purposes, and the influence of organizations like Moral Re-Armament, which also advocated a non-confrontational approach to labour relations. Jamha, Interview Transcript.

election, losing by less than 200 votes in the first ballot.[126] More typically, however, packing candidates who ran in Edmonton had a dismal showing at the polls. Alex Goruk, president of the Canada Packers local in Edmonton, ran as a labour candidate for a municipal seat in 1954 and then in the provincial election for an Edmonton seat in 1959, losing both times by a significant margin. Former Canada Packers worker Roy Jamha also ran unsuccessfully for a municipal seat in 1954 as a labour candidate. In 1958 Swift union activist Peter Uganecz ran for a municipal seat and lost. The only packing worker to achieve political stature was Burns unionist Ethel Wilson. After initially losing as a labour candidate in the 1950 municipal election, Wilson ran in 1952 as a member of the business-backed Citizen's Committee slate and won, initiating a remarkable string of electoral victories in the 1950s and 1960s.[127] Wilson won a municipal seat in five of the seven elections in which she ran in Edmonton and continued to win a municipal seat after turning her attention to provincial politics where she also won a seat for Edmonton North as a Social Credit candidate in 1959. When she was appointed Minister Without Portfolio by Premier Ernest Manning shortly before the 1963 election, Wilson retired from her packing job of twenty-five years as a seamstress at the Burns plant. She also gave up municipal politics to devote her energy to the provincial arena where she held her post as a cabinet minister until 1972 when she retired from electoral politics.[128] By then the energy and enthusiasm of Edmonton's packing leaders for political activism had waned. Their attention was directed instead toward the growing crisis in class

[126] Wark, *A Report on Alberta Elections, 1905-1982.*
[127] According to Roy Jamha, Swift worker Dan Smith also ran in the 1950 municipal election, but lost. Jamha, Interview Transcript. Edmonton Public Library: www.epl.ca/Elections/EPLIndex.cfm
[128] Freda Fitzpatrick, "New Minister Lives in Humble Cottage," *Edmonton Journal*, 3 December 1962; Gail Helgason, "Ethel Wilson, Former Socred Minister, Dies at 82," *Edmonton Journal*, 9 December 1983.

relations triggered by industry restructuring, which erupted into a series of costly strikes and lockouts.

Solidarity, Militancy and Progressive Unionism, 1966-1979

When labour relations at Canada Packers ruptured completely in 1966 workers in the Edmonton plant strongly supported national strike action. Strike vote numbers for Edmonton were not available, but ninety-one per cent of eligible union members nationally turned out to vote by secret ballot and ninety-five per cent of them were in favour of striking.[129] According to newspaper reports wages were an important issue because workers felt wages had fallen far behind the profit increases the company was reaping from productivity gains.[130] But the real sticking point was the union's insistence on new contract language to protect union rights. The union was particularly anxious to end the company's recent policy of penalizing union officials more heavily than regular union members for any contract infraction. Voluntary overtime and the right to grieve work loads were also important issues.[131]

During the 1966 strike there was considerable solidarity with Canada Packers workers in Edmonton. A number of workers from the Swift, Burns and Gainer's locals came out to join the strikers on the picket line outside Canada Packers. Swift workers also paid for the

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[129] It is worth noting again that no staff reports were available in the archives for the period from 1966 to 1979 at the time this research was conducted, but union minutes for regular and some executive meetings were available for the city's two largest packing locals. The asymmetrical nature of union sources reinforces the sense that 1966 was an important turning point for the union. It also means union sources offer two quite different lenses on developments in the packing locals for the earlier and later period; staff reports, which offer the perspective of one individual who is outside the locals, and union minutes, which offer a glimpse of a local's internal workings.

[130] *The Canadian Packinghouse Worker*, July 1966, p 6.

[131] Wilfred List, "The Silent Strike: Crisis Point near in Packers' Talks," *Globe and Mail*, 23 September 1966.

picketers' soup kitchen and Gainer workers provided live music to entertain picketers.[132] There appeared to be solid support for pro-rated weekly contributions to a strike fund from all UPWA members across the country and the United States.[133] Unlike the many wild-cat strikes occurring at the time, there is no evidence of a revolt against the local or national leadership of the union.

The Canada Packers strike was part of a wave of militancy in the mid-1960s that has been linked to growing disillusionment with the Postwar Compromise, which was increasingly criticized for producing a bureaucratic morass that stymied the resolution of grievances and largely nullified the strike weapon. Critics emphasize that this "modern" labour relations "institution" distanced union leaders from the rank and file, and alienated a new generation of workers, turning them against their own leadership in significant numbers.[134] Scholars have also noted the influence of youths born after the war who began entering the workforce in large numbers in the 1960s and had higher expectations of respect and control in the workplace than they found under the Postwar Compromise.[135] Another factor was the low unemployment rate in the regions and industries hit hardest by wildcat strikes, which strengthened the position of labour.

The Canadian meatpacking industry was distinctive within this context in several ways. Although the unemployment rate was even lower in Alberta, the number of packing workers

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[132] Alex Goruk, "'Like Old Times'," *The Canadian Packinghouse Worker* 1966.
[133] "1966 Strike Bulletins," (Rexdale: UFCW, Bill Reno papers). #3 and #4. The one exception in Edmonton union records was an Edmonton man at Gainer's who wrote directly to Fred Dowling asking to be exempted from the strike fund per capita because with seven children to support he felt he could not afford the contribution., (Edmonton: LAC, CFAW fonds, MG 28 I-186, accession 1984-0536, Box 20, Local 319, 1954-75).
[134] Palmer, *Canada's 1960s*. 213-215.
[135] McInnis, "Hothead Troubles: 1960s-Era Wildcat Strikes in Canada." Milligan, "Rebel Youth". Chapter Two.

nationally remained stable from the mid-1950s through 1966 despite industry expansion as new technologies and processes cut jobs, which meant the workforce did not see a dramatic influx of young workers.[136] The average age of both male and female workers actually rose during these years.[137] Perhaps most importantly, trusted leadership figures at the national, regional and provincial level who had been in place since the war appeared to be attuned to and supportive of the grassroots impetus about union recognition that was behind the Canada Packers strike. Writing several years before the 1966 strike, J. Alton Craig argued that fear of punitive measures following the high-profile illegal national strike in 1947 made UPWA's Canadian leaders careful to prevent a wildcat strike, which seemed to help make them responsive to their membership.[138]

When the ten-week stand-off ended, most workers were satisfied with a settlement that included stronger contract language to protect union officers, as well as provisions to reduce contracting out, and gave workers the right to grieve speedups and work loads. Workers also won a substantial wage increase.[139] Before they voted on the contract, Fred Dowling said he felt "certain" the majority of workers would vote to end the strike and approve the contract. Nationally sixty-two per cent of workers turned out to vote on the contract and seventy-three per cent of them followed the negotiating committee's recommendation. Results for the

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[136] Canada, Dominion Bureau of Statistics and Statistics Canada, *Manufacturing Industries of Canada, Prairie Provinces = Industries Manufacturières Du Canada. Provinces Des Prairies*. Manufacturing and Primary Industries Division, 1930-1971.

[137] The average age of men rose from 34 in 1951 to 37 in 1961 and remained 37 in 1971. The average age of women increased from 25 in 1951 to 33 in 1961 and 36 by 1971. Canada. Dominion Bureau of Statistics, *Census of Canada, 1961: Recensement Du Canada. Labour Force. Main-D'oeuvre*; Canada. Dominion Bureau of Statistics, *Classification of Occupations, Ninth Census of Canada, 1951*, Statistics Canada., *Census: Labour Force, Occupations*, Edmonton, Table 6.

[138] During the 1947 strike UPWA's Quebec locals were decertified by the government of Maurice Duplessis and the government in Prince Edward Island took over the Canada Packers plant. Craig, "The Consequences of Provincial Jurisdiction". 248 Montague, "Trade Unionism".

[139] *The Canadian Packinghouse Worker*, October, 1966.

Edmonton vote were not available, but seventy per cent of workers turned out and according to Alex Goruk only ten of the 550 striking workers chose not to return to the packinghouse.[140]

Although the strike was a victory for the union in many ways, the tremendous financial cost it imposed on UPWA as well as the company, together with growing competition within the industry, ratcheted class tensions to a new level in all the Edmonton plants.[141] Staff reports on negotiations at Swift and Gainer's in the late 1960s were described as very difficult, with Gainer going to conciliation in 1969.[142] In the aftermath of the strike relations between labour and management at the Canada Packers plant in Edmonton became quite hostile, making it more difficult to settle grievances.[143] At the Gainer plant men on the kill floor abandoned the grievance procedure in 1968 and walked off the job over safety concerns about speeding up the newly mechanized beef kill. The company responded to this militancy by agreeing to reduce the line speed, bringing back the installer to correct "bugs" in the system, and bringing in a Workman's Compensation Board inspector to determine whether the system was hazardous. It also agreed to drop the idea of suing the union for damages.[144]

Despite the workplace leverage workers appeared to sustain through militancy, the financial burden of the Canada Packers strike compelled UPWA to merge with its long-time rival, The Amalgamated Meat Cutters and Butcher Workmen in 1968, which fostered a more

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[140] "Packers May End Strike," *Edmonton Journal*, 27 September. "Settlement Expected in Packers' Strike," *Edmonton Journal*, 30 September.

[141] The union paid out more than $750,000 in strike benefits and the company lost several million dollars and saw its share price drop. List, "The Silent Strike: Crisis Point near in Packers' Talks."

[142] S.S. Hughes, "LAC, CFAW Fonds, Mg 28 I-186, Accession 1984-0536, Box 44, Grievances, Local 280, 3 December," (1968). , (LAC, CFAW fonds, MG 28 I-186, accession 1984-0536, Box. 1, Alberta Council 1968-80, Meeting Minutes).

[143] Goruk, "Re: Superintendent."

[144] Norm Riches, (LAC, CFAW fonds, MG 28 I-186, accession 1984-0536, Box 20, 319 Gainers 1954-1975, 3 January, 1968).

conservative leadership culture and stronger regional differences within the union.[145] It also reduced some of the Canadian district's autonomy.[146] The packing union's goal was to match the growth and diversification of packing corporations with comparable union growth, which would allow the union to generate a more substantial strike fund from its enhanced membership base. Renamed Canadian Food and Allied Workers to accommodate rising nationalist sentiment, the Canadian district retained its geographic shape, but meatpacking workers became only one-tenth of the Amalgamated union's North American membership, giving them a limited voice in a larger, more diverse union.[147] The merger had been in the works since 1956 when craft and industrial union federations merged in Canada and the United States, but there had been considerable resistance within UPWA, perhaps because of the bitter rivalry of the 1940s, as well as the craft union's more conservative leadership. Another important difference was the division of staff into business agents, who serviced roughly twelve contracts each, and international representatives, whose job was to organize new workplaces to grow the union. This structural change also made the newly merged union more decentralized because, unlike international representatives, who were responsible to the national director of the union, business agents were responsible to the provincial union council. As former business agent Norm Leclaire explained in an interview, this change fostered decentralization and regional militancy because "the rank and file had a lot more control over their staff, who they were and what they did."[148]

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[145] The industrial union had changed its name to United Food and Allied Workers (UFAW) during the 1960s to better capture the growing diversity of its food industry workers, before the merger.
[146] For example, the Canadian district no longer had its own publication. Instead it published a few pages in *The Butcher Workmen,* which greatly reduced the amount of Canadian coverage.
[147] "CFAW Merger with AMC&BW," (LAC, CFAW fonds, MG 28 I-186, PWOC and UPWA series, Vol 55, Merger List of Locals for CFAW).
[148] Norm Leclaire, Telephone Interview (Lethbridge: 2006).

There was considerable discontent within the Edmonton locals with the newly merged union, and increasingly, with new attitudes within the leadership. A number of Alberta leaders perceived a growing arbitrariness in decision-making by the national executive and less sensitivity to the local perspective. This shift became evident shortly after the 1968 merger. In February, 1970 Alex Goruk secured financial support from his union local for a special trip to Toronto to take up questions about the union's new "business agent" model, questions that he said he had been asking Fred Dowling since October without receiving any response.[149]

Several developments accelerated changes in the style of leadership at the executive level of the union in Canada during the 1970s. By 1973 the death of a key national union official, and a wave of retirements had changed the face of the union's leadership. In 1972 the union's national research director, John Lenglet died of a stroke and a few months later the Canadian director of the union, Fred Dowling, retired.[150] Former assistant director Romeo Mathieu was elected to replace Dowling at the international convention that year. Closer to home, Alberta staff representative Jack Hampson and Western regional director Norm Riches retired in June.[151] This meant that the key union leaders outside their local that Edmonton packinghouse workers interacted with were new in their jobs. Both nationally and internationally leadership in the newly expanded union became more centralized in the 1970s. These changes in the union also occurred against a backdrop of growing Western

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[149] Canada Packers Local 243, "Officers' Meeting Minutes 1967-1970," (Edmonton: UFCW Local 1118, 2004). 28 January 1970.

[150] "John Lenglet, Staff Man Dead," *Butcher Workman*, March; "Saskatchewan Locals Honor Dowling," *Butcher Workmen*, June.

[151] Although Jack Hampson was replaced in Edmonton with Peter Uganecz as the staff representative for the northern region of the province, he moved to Calgary as staff representative for Alberta's southern region and continued to play a vital role in UPWA provincially until his retirement. "Alberta Provincial Council Holds Convention," *Butcher Workman.*

alienation in the 1970s centred in Alberta where Progressive Conservative Premier Peter Lougheed challenged the right of Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau to dictate trade terms for Alberta's energy resources.[152] These changes set the stage for significant conflict between Alberta packing locals and the national union leadership, with Edmonton leaders in the vanguard.

In 1974 Alberta meatpacking workers bucked the direction of their national union leadership and the will of packing unionists in most of the country to "almost unanimously" reject a recommended settlement with Swift Canadian that had been mediated in "key" contract negotiations that year.[153] Workers in Edmonton comprised the largest group of packing workers in the province, and were the most vocal.[154] Again, in 1978, Alberta workers rejected the terms recommended by their national union leadership in negotiations with Swift. The subsequent lock-out by Canada Packers to support Swift after the union struck, put thousands of packing workers across the country on the street even though they had voted to accept the recommended settlement. In both labour disputes, however, Alberta workers resisted the efforts of the companies and even the encouragement of their national union leadership to break with the system of national pattern bargaining. Instead, propelled by the desire to keep up with prices in a booming oil-based economy, they forced the Big Three packing companies to make significant concessions that benefited all Canadian packing workers, not just those in Alberta, despite a deepening recession in the rest of the country.[155]

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[152] Finkel, *Our Lives*. 220-222.
[153] The "key" contract set the pattern for the industry. Leclaire, Interview Transcript. Courtesy of Ian MacLachlan.
[154] "Results of Vote: Beef Processing Plant Manager Still Waiting," *Moose Jaw Times*, 14 June.
[155] ———, Interview Transcript.

These two labour disputes demonstrate the sustained solidarity and militancy of Edmonton's packing workers in the 1970s, and their ability to leverage their position within the national system of pattern bargaining to give their militancy national impact. The disputes also reveal a deep regional divide among leaders of the union and the dissatisfaction of Edmonton's packing rank and file with their own national leadership. In both 1974 and 1978 national executives of the union negotiated a deal with the target company and presented it as a *fait accompli* to the union negotiating committee comprised of delegates elected by locals across the country. The 1974 Alberta lock-out by Swift, Canada Packers, and Burns began after union leaders in Alberta and British Columbia rejected their national leadership's direction and recommended that their membership vote against the latest offer, a move the companies called "highly prejudicial."[156] Edmonton workers strongly rejected the company's offer.[157]

Edmonton workers directed their anger about the 1974 lock-out at their national union leadership for conducting negotiations behind closed doors. In the first week of the lock-out Alberta members of the union firmly rejected the companies' "five-point plan," which would have allowed workers in each plant to sign a contract separately if a majority of the membership was in agreement.[158] At this point the national office of the union held to its rule that "any settlement must be national in scope."[159] In the second week of the lock-out, however, under Romeo Mathieu's direction, the national leadership decided "to let Alberta

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[156] Nationally ninety-one per cent of eligible packing workers voted on the offer and nine out of eleven plants in Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec, and the Maritimes voted for acceptance. In Alberta seven out of eight plants voted against it with results in British Columbia and Saskatchewan mixed. Jan-Udo Wenzel, "Packing Plant Offer Rejected," *Edmonton Journal*, 13 June 1974.
[157] Swift Local 280, "GMM Minutes - Negotiations," (Edmonton: UFCW Local 1118, 1974). 4 June.
[158] Wenzel, "Packing Plant Offer Rejected."
[159] "Union Offers Talks," *Hamilton Spectator*, 22 June.

members seek their own settlement with the companies."[160] Alberta workers responded to this about-face by agreeing to negotiate a separate agreement "only if union members in the rest of the country accept the proposed settlement."[161] This strategy of union solidarity secured better terms for all Canadian packing unionists when pressure from farmers forced government involvement and a speedy resolution of the deadlock.[162]

Although there was more rank and file support nationally for striking in 1978, there were significant parallels with the 1974 labour dispute.[163] In this dispute the national office again presented its negotiating committees with a final contract offer and Alberta workers voted most strongly against both the initial settlement recommended by their national leadership, and the final settlement reached more than seven weeks later when the dispute ended. Again, workers in Edmonton were among the most militant. In the 1978 Canada Packers vote, which took place first because that company took the lead from Swift during negotiations, Edmonton workers voted seventy-seven per cent against the offer recommended by the union's national executive. Nationally, however, the membership had ratified the contract and the local packers returned grudgingly to work.[164] Finally, the series of strikes and lockouts between 1966 and 1978 demonstrates a major shift in the relationship between local unionists and leaders and the union leadership at the national office. Edmonton

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[160] *Ibid.*
[161] "Alberta Meat Packers Stay Locked out as Producers Demand Quick Settlement," *Toronto Star*, 26 June.
[162] Sixty-five per cent of the national membership voted in favour of the newly conciliated settlement. "3 Packing Plants Resume Operations," *Edmonton Journal*, 17 July. In the initial vote before the strike, 52% of the national union membership supported it. Leclaire, Interview Transcript. The Canadian district of the union saw farmers as allies and after the national meatpacking strike in 1947, when farmers were hurt badly because they had nowhere to sell their livestock, the union determined never to strike all of the major packing companies at once.
[163] Swift was targeted by the union that year and Swift workers nationally voted eighty-one per cent in favour of striking before they were locked out. "Meat Workers Expected to Reject Pact," *Edmonton Journal*, 11 August.
[164] "Packers to Stay Out," *Edmonton Journal*, 12 August.

unionists saw the new practice in the 1970s of national union executives negotiating the key contract with management and presenting it to the negotiating committee, as highly undemocratic.

Alberta's economic boom in the 1970s was a major factor shaping the distinctive militancy of Edmonton packing workers in wage-related negotiations because the unemployment rate remained much lower than in most parts of Canada. **[Table 3]** The labour shortage combined with rising inflation to create strong cohesion among Edmonton packing workers at bargaining time. Yet there were other important displays of local solidarity and militancy. In the mid-1970s many Edmonton packing workers participated in the 1976 National Day of Protest organized by the CLC and AFL in opposition to the Trudeau government's wage controls.[165] Once again members of the Canada Packers local were the most militant. According to a grievance filed by the company, a "far higher" percentage of Edmonton Canada Packers workers stayed off work than packing workers anywhere else in the city or in Canada Packers plants across the country.[166] The integrity of the union continued to be a major source of solidarity and militancy in some plants. In October, 1974 the entire Burns plant walked off the job over the suspension of union leaders who had left the plant the previous day to discuss a grievance off site, triggering a $700,000 company lawsuit.[167] There was much less interest, however, in pursuing progressive egalitarian ideals. As we will see in Chapter Six, packing women secured major gains like equal pay and equal benefits for married women largely without the assistance of local union

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[165] Heron, *The Canadian Labour Movement*. 110

[166] CFAW Local 243, "President's Notes." CFAW Alberta Provincial Council Special Message about October 14th National Day of Protest, 17 November 1976.

[167] The outcome of this incident is unclear. *Ibid.* J.R. Graham, 12 November 1974. J.P. Smith, (LAC, CFAW fonds, MG 28 I-186, accession 1984-0536, Box 20, Burns, 1955-1975, 19 November, 1974).

leaders.[168] There is no evidence of activism around racial or ethnic discrimination in this later period. Contract demands were focused on wage gains to keep up with inflation and on improving pensions and benefits for an aging workforce that was shrinking because of restructuring. A growing number of plant closures also made layoff settlements a rising priority in negotiations.

In 1979 the Amalgamated union merged with the Retail Clerks International Union to form the United Food and Commercial Workers Union (UFCW).[169] This was another attempt to strengthen the union by growing it bigger.[170] The merger further diluted the influence of the packinghouse division and completely destroyed the former structure of industrial unionism that had fostered strong rank and file participation and militancy.[171] It was within this context of growing union conservatism at the international level that Burns announced in April, 1979 that its Edmonton packinghouse would be shut down in September. Workers were blindsided by the announcement and the local Burns leadership held such resentment toward the national office of the union that they chose to spend what was left in the union local's treasury on a big party for the members.[172] According to one former union leader national union executives expected the local to turn over its entire treasury to the

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[168] The activism of women auto workers in Ontario was key to amending the Human Rights Code to eliminate all sex-based language from union contracts.Sugiman, *Labour's Dilemma.* 167.

[169] This Retail Clerks union had a long history of being tightly controlled by the American Federation of Labour. Packing workers in Canada and the United States comprised only ten per cent of UFCW, and the Canadian district comprised only ten per cent of that. Horowitz, *Negro and White.* 265. Jan Kainer has demonstrated that a male-biased union culture, labour leadership, and corporate management structure in UFCW helped prevent the enlarged union from securing pay equity for its large female membership employed in supermarkets. Jan Kainer, *Cashing in on Pay Equity? Supermarket Restructuring and Gender Equality*, Women's Issues Publishing Program (Toronto, Ont.: Sumach Press, 2002). 21.

[170] According to Roger Horowitz it was also an effort to resolve internal warring among regional directors after the retirement of the union's director, Patrick Gorman, in 1977. Horowitz, *Negro and White.* 264.

[171] *Ibid.* 246, 264, 265.

[172] The costs for re-employment consulting came out of the local's treasury before they held the party. *Stan, Interview (Edmonton: 2006).

national office, but the local membership refused because they felt it was their money. The plant closure triggered a major shift in labour's power locally after several decades of unprecedented strength. Ironically, the Burns closure, which was followed by closure of the Gainer and Canada Packers plants within five years, helped trigger a resurgence of worker political engagement in the 1980s.

Conclusion

This chapter has traced the rise of industrial unionism in North-East Edmonton's packing district and the establishment of national pattern bargaining. Experiencing the full force of employer power in the early years convinced most Edmonton union activists of the need for an inclusive union, national in scope, that could secure centralized bargaining to work for the common good of packing workers across the country. For many the struggle to establish effective unionism triggered an "awakening" to a social conscience and the collective power of working people. There was also considerable support initially for the democratic and egalitarian ideals promoted by UPWA and for political activism.

During the era of national pattern bargaining when Edmonton packing unionists had unprecedented economic leverage, they were able to sustain a high level of solidarity and militancy around issues that threatened the integrity of their union, and around wages, particularly in the inflationary 1970s. This included issues resulting from the policies and practices of management, but also those of the state. Most locals, however, found it difficult to commit energy and resources to union education, labour movement activism and particularly political action. Their commitment to the union's progressive ideals, however, was less consistent. External investigations and union minutes reveal that the attitude of some local union leaders toward democratic union processes could be quite cavalier. Yet

Edmonton packing workers reacted strongly in the 1970s when the union's national executives began to bypass the democratically elected national negotiating committee. Similarly, despite national union support in the 1940s for equal pay and for protecting the rights of those seen as non-white, egalitarian issues quickly dropped off the priority list of the city's packing locals.

The commitment of some Edmonton packing leaders to political activism was also inconsistent. Internal factionalism compromised the energetic efforts of many local union activists to make an impact on community politics. To gain insight into why Ethel Wilson was the only successful politician produced by Edmonton's packing community, we will turn now to the ways in which gender intersected with class to shape the culture of the shop floor. Chapters Five and Six explore the gender identities of Edmonton's male and female packing workforce respectively, profiling dominant notions of packing masculinity and femininity, and ways in which these norms were challenged.

Chapter Five: "A special breed" -- Packing Men and the Class and Racial Politics of Manly Discourses

Bruce P.'s job at Canada Packers' Edmonton plant in the 1970s was to hang a fine net shrouding on freshly slaughtered beef carcasses to protect the meat during cooling in the freezer on the beef killing floor – a department where debilitating heat and humidity intensified the stench of freshly slaughtered animals. In an interview nearly thirty years later he recalled with a smile, "A lot of people used to come up to me - How could you do that? How could you eat meat after you do this? So you have to be sort of a special breed to do that to begin with, I guess."[1] As former Swift Canadian worker Peter Hohlbein, who began working in the Edmonton plant in 1977, explained:

> We've had people come in and start at 7 o'clock and by coffee time at 8:30 or 9 o'clock they'd disappear, you wouldn't see them again. The pace of the work. It takes a special breed to be a meat packer, it really does. Because there's people that can't handle the kill floor situation. It is bloody and gory, and in the summer it's 190 degrees inside the kill floor when it's 80 outside.[2]

Bruce P. and Hohlbein articulated a common notion of packinghouse men as exceptional because of their ability to tolerate jobs in harsh environments like the killing floor, the rendering plant, the hide house, and the pickle cellar, where the repulsive sensory onslaught wilted many new hires.[3] Doing a job that women and many men could not or

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[1] Bruce P., Interview (Edmonton: 2004).
[2] Peter Hohlbein, Interview Transcript (Edmonton: Alberta Labour History Institute/Ground Zero, 1998).
[3] The pickle cellar was a dark, damp, and cold department where hams were bathed in brine. In the hide house men worked with cattle hides heavy with blood and mud. All leftover parts of the animals went into

would not do gave male workers who had exclusive access to those plant areas until the 1970s a sense of masculine pride and superiority. It also helped them cope with the stigma of dehumanization associated with industrial-scale slaughtering and meat processing jobs. During the halcyon days of industrial unionism in the Canadian meatpacking industry in the decades following World War Two, good wages and benefits helped dignify the disturbing and degrading work of slaughtering livestock and processing meat under harsh conditions.

This chapter focuses on the nature of masculinities constructed by unionized men in Edmonton packinghouses during the era of national bargaining when workers had unprecedented power in their relations with capital. Two central questions led me to this inquiry: To what extent did a greater degree of job security, some voice in the workplace, and strong wages and benefits foster a historically specific notion of packinghouse masculinity?[4] How did Edmonton packing men redefine their masculinity to protect their manly identity in the context of the changing class, gender, and racial/ethnic dynamics of the Canadian meatpacking industry? The labour shortages created by Edmonton's more intense and prolonged period of prosperity following large oil and gas discoveries after World War Two make the city a useful setting for exploring how packinghouse masculinities were influenced by increased worker power.[5] Also, Alberta saw a larger increase in the proportion of male production workers than any other Canadian province because of industry

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the rendering plant. The bodies of workers in all of these departments acquired an odour that was impossible to remove while they worked there daily.

[4] Although Anne Forrest has argued that under the system of national pattern bargaining workers exchanged control in the workplace for higher wages, for the purposes of this chapter it is significant that workers had a greater say in Edmonton plants than before or after a system of centralized bargaining was put in place. Forrest, "The Rise and Fall of National Bargaining." 400

[5] Palmer and Palmer, *Alberta*. Caragata, *Alberta Labour*.

restructuring.[6] Finally, Edmonton's economic boom attracted immigrants, a growing number of whom were those seen as people of colour by the 1970s.[7] Their presence helped make explicit racialized notions of packinghouse masculinity operating in Edmonton plants.

Membership in a powerful industrial union during the era of national pattern bargaining helped foster a distinctive notion of packing masculinity as dignified and self-respecting, yet also tough and decisive. This brand of masculinity helped workers secure major gains in shop floor confrontations and at the bargaining table. The need to endure a harsh work environment and stand up to the boss also meant that many male workers could be rough and aggressive. Valuing these qualities increased tolerance for domineering and abusive behaviour that ranged from profanity and intimidating or humiliating initiation rites to harassment and physical brawls. These distinctive aspects of identity were central to how many male packinghouse workers in Edmonton -- the majority of them Canadian-born children of United Kingdom or East European immigrants, most often Ukrainian -- understood their subjectivity as working-class men and proud unionists. It is how they distinguished themselves from women and from those seen as non-white. On the shop floor and in the union hall these manly discourses and behaviours, which could be sexist, ethnically charged, or homophobic, conflicted with the democratic, egalitarian, and socially progressive values of the union. They had a corrosive effect that limited class solidarity and the union's social justice mandate by subordinating women and reinforcing ethnic and other divisions.

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[6] The proportion of men in Alberta went from just over 70% during World War Two to nearly 90% in the 1970s, while nationally it remained fairly stable at about 82% during the same period. Statistics Canada, *Manufacturing Industries of Canada National and Provincial Areas,* 1972-1980; ———, *The General Review of the Manufacturing Industries of Canada*: V. 1, Industries by Province, 1949-1971, cat. 31-203.

[7] Palmer and Palmer, *Peoples of Alberta.*

In recent years, feminist labour historians writing gendered histories of workers and the working class, and other scholars of masculinity, have demonstrated convincingly that notions about manhood are inherently unstable, varying across time and space.[8] As Franca Iacovetta has explained, masculinity, like femininity, "is neither a biological state of being nor a fixed and unitary set of practices and identities," but rather a relational construct "forged in particular contexts and by the critical forces, including class, race-ethnicity, state power, patriarchy, and ideology, that shape such contexts."[9] A number of studies have theorized and documented hegemonic forms of working-class masculinity and challenges to its claim to authority.[10] My analysis is also informed by recent work that draws attention to the ways in which the male working-class body has been a vehicle for both oppression and resistance.[11] Influenced by left and labour feminists, I consider working-class men's privilege and power, especially in relation to various "others," including women and racial minorities.[12] Although there is a rich literature on packinghouse workers in the United States, scholarly interest in historical notions of packing masculinities has been limited.[13]

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[8] Ava Baron has argued that hegemonic masculinities are fundamentally unstable because of internal contradictions, which trigger a constant need for validation. Baron, "Masculinity."

[9] Franca Iacovetta, "Defending Honour, Demanding Respect: Manly Discourse and Gendered Practice in Two Construction Strikes, Toronto, 1960-61," in *Gendered Pasts: Historical Essays in Femininity and Masculinity in Canada*, ed. Cecilia Morgan Kathryn McPherson, and Nancy M. Forestell (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1999). 199

[10] R. W. Connell, *Masculinities* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995). 7. Craig Heron, "The Boys and Their Booze: Masculinities and Public Drinking in Working-Class Hamilton, 1890-1946," *Canadian Historical Review* 86, no. 3 (2005); Steven Maynard, "Rough Work and Rugged Men: The Social Construction of Masculinity in Working-Class History," *Labour/Le Travail* 23(1989); Todd McCallum, ""Not a Sex Question?" The One Big Union and the Politics of Radical Manhood," *Labour/Le Travail* 42(1998); Thomas W. Dunk, *It's a Working Man's Town : Male Working-Class Culture in Northwestern Ontario* (Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1991).

[11] Baron, "Masculinity."

[12] Parr, *Gender of Breadwinners*; Frager, *Sweatshop Strife*; Creese, *Contracting Masculinity*; Iacovetta, "Defending Honour."

[13] Debra Fink and Warren Wilson provide some insight into notions of packing masculinity, but it is not a focus of their work. Wilson, *Struggling with Iowa's Pride*; Deborah Fink, "What Kind of Woman Would

Within the Canadian context, studies of the packinghouse industry and union have completely overlooked constructions of masculinity.[14]

In labour history more broadly, British and American scholars have identified the "rough" and the "respectable" as two dominant understandings of working-class masculinity that date back to the nineteenth century, which offers a useful starting point for thinking about packinghouse masculinities. In Victorian England male working-class respectability was tied to the "good" wages and steady employment attained almost exclusively by skilled workers, which allowed them to attain self-respect by living in a "comfortable" home with a wife who did not perform wage labour, and to accumulate some savings.[15] In the American context several labour historians have explored the nature of "rough" masculinity in the mid-twentieth-century automobile industry. Kevin Boyle and Stephen Meyer characterize working-class masculinities in this industry as a combination of both respectable and rough behaviours that also align largely with skill level.[16] Meyer explains these dominant strands of working-class masculinity as a legacy of the pre-industrial era when skilled workers distinguished themselves by their responsibility, autonomy, and control, and less skilled workers performed a more rugged, aggressive brand of masculinity that derived from heavy manual labour, engaging in risk, and enduring difficult working conditions. Meyer notes that

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Work in Meatpacking, Anyway? World War II and the Road to Fair Employment," *Great Plains Research* 5, no. Fall (1995). In other studies of American packing workers notions of masculinity are largely overlooked. Deslippe, *Rights Not Roses*; Barrett, *Work and Community in the Jungle*; Halpern, *Down on the Killing Floor*; Horowitz, *Negro and White*; Fehn, "Striking Women".

[14] MacLachlan, *Kill and Chill*. Chapter 7.Montague, "Trade Unionism"; Grover, "Winnipeg Meat Packing Workers"; Bain, "UFAW's Development"; Craig, "The Consequences of Provincial Jurisdiction".

[15] Janet McCalman, "Respectability and Working-Class Politics in Late-Victorian London," *Historical Studies* 19, no. 74 (1980). 114. Brian Howard Harrison, *Peaceable Kingdom: Stability and Change in Modern Britain* (Oxford, New York: Clarendon Press; Oxford University Press, 1982). 166-67.

[16] Kevin Boyle, "The Kiss: Racial and Gender Conflict in a 1950s Automobile Factory," *The Journal of American History* 84, no. 2 (September) (1997).

increasing mechanization during the twentieth century emasculated many jobs men typically performed by reducing or eliminating skill, worker control, and the need for physical strength in many jobs: "Removing the male traits of brawn and brain from workplace skills, Taylorism and Fordism redefined skill as the endurance of repetitious and monotonous tasks and their speedy and dexterous performance. For both craftsmen and labourers, their work became unmanly."[17] Meyer, and others have demonstrated that mass production workers responded to these changes by fashioning new identities that drew on both respectable and rough masculinities in ways that were specific to a particular place and time.[18] Canadian scholarly attention has tended to focus on the notion of respectable working-class masculinity practiced by craft workers, more than occupations that feature displays of "rough" masculinity.[19] Steven Maynard's insightful analysis of a bushworkers' study helps us see how a lower-ranked "rough" working-class masculinity is a function of race and ethnicity as

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[17] Stephen Meyer, "Work, Play, and Power: Masculine Culture on the Automotive Shop Floor, 1930-1960," in *Boys and Their Toys? Masculinity, Class and Technology in America*, ed. Roger Horowitz (New York: Routledge, 2001); ———, "Rough Manhood: The Aggressive and Confrontational Shop Culture of U.S. Auto Workers During World War II," *Journal of Social History* 36, no. 1 (2002). See also Dunk, *It's a Working Man's Town*. Taylorism refers to the "scientific management" strategy introduced by American engineer Frederick Winslow Taylor in the early twentieth century of standardizing tasks, minimizing worker autonomy, and finding the "one best way," to increase productivity. Heron, *The Canadian Labour Movement*. 29. Fordism refers to the Postwar Compromise between business and labour that brought higher wages and improved benefits to unionized workers in exchange for acceptance of overall management authority and continuous production during the life of a collective agreement. Finkel, *Our Lives*. 90

[18] Lisa M. Fine, *The Story of Reo Joe: Work, Kin, and Community in Autotown, U.S.A* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2004). In Mary Bluett's American study male respectability dictated that the wives of workers carry out the "rough" behaviour associated with a labour dispute. Mary H. Bluett, "Manhood and the Market: The Politics of Gender and Class among the Textile Workers of Fall River, Massachusetts," in *Work Engendered: Toward a New History of American Labor*, ed. Ava Baron (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1991).

[19] Parr, *Gender of Breadwinners*; Mark Rosenfeld, "'It Was a Hard Life': Class and Gender in the Work and Family Rhythms of a Railway Town, 1920-1950," *Historical Papers* (1988); Steve Penfold, ""Have You No Manhood in You?": Gender and Class in the Cape Breton Coal Towns, 1920-26," in *Gender and History in Canada*, ed. Joy Parr and Mark Rosenfeld (Toronto: Copp Clark Ltd., 1996).

well as skill and gender.[20] Most importantly, British historian Peter Bailey's analysis of working-class respectability, among other things, makes explicit its performance aspect by showing how male workers in nineteenth-century Britain drew selectively on disparate discourses to construct themselves differently, depending on the social context.[21] Both skilled and unskilled working-class men were also united by the belief that the respectability of male workers hinged on the exclusion of women from the workplace.

Packinghouse Masculinity

In Edmonton packinghouses male craft workers still comprised roughly ten per cent of the production workforce in the 1940s. These men adhered more firmly to the craftman's notion of working-class respectability, but their numbers declined during the era of national pattern bargaining as new technologies further subdivided the butchering processes that once required great skill. The vast majority of packing men were either semi-skilled or most likely unskilled manual labourers who developed their own distinctive notions of working-class respectability.

One of the hallmarks of packing masculinity during the era of national bargaining was a strong sense of dignity and self respect as a worker, regardless of the hierarchies imposed by management. Some men derided the premium management placed on particular bodies that was reflected in the "colour line" for management jobs enforced by Swift, and in all companies' preference for tall, husky, well-muscled male bodies in the hiring process. Before the union came in the hiring staff's practice of feeling a man's arms "to see what kind of muscle you had" reduced workers to another breed of livestock. The implied association

[20] Maynard, "Rough Work and Rugged Men." 164.
[21] Peter Bailey, ""Will the Real Bill Banks Please Stand Up?" Towards a Role Analysis of Mid-Victorian Working-Class Respectability," *The Journal of Social History* Spring(1979).

between "breed" and racialization was reinforced by the Anglo-Celtic management's long tradition of preferring East European men for unskilled production work, particularly Ukrainians, because of the racist practice of assuming that they were "suited [to] packinghouse work since they were 'rough and tough people...real snuff chewers.'"[22] As Ava Baron has pointed out, white, male management's ability to place a premium on male working-class bodies for their brawn and endurance in a harsh work environment actually devalued both the work and the men who performed it by signaling exploitation, not status, in the eyes of middle-class packing men.[23] During the era of national bargaining semi-skilled and unskilled men who did not have the work traditions of craftsmen could draw on the union infrastructure, particularly seniority, to defend themselves against ethnic or racial discrimination.[24] But as a class production men were demeaned by the indignities of performing heavy work in a disgusting environment of temperature and humidity extremes.

Male workers' perceptions of their own size and strength, and whether or not they performed some of the heaviest or dirtiest work, shaped their attitude in ways that affirmed their personal dignity and value. Peter Zotek took pride in the "damn good bonus" he earned on the loading dock performing the heaviest job in the packinghouse lugging beef. He attributed his ability to "produce" to the fact that the eight or ten men he worked with "were all young big men like myself, it was no problem."[25] Yet another man who was tall, but not husky, and who worked mainly in the relatively clean shipping department filling customer

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[22] John Hanley Grover's evidence from oral interviews is specific to management in Winnipeg packing plants in the 1930s and 40s, but the attitude was similar in the Edmonton context well into the postwar era. Grover, "Winnipeg Meat Packing Workers". 24. In the American context Roger Horowitz and Rick Halpern have demonstrated that the bodies of African-American and East European men and women were racialized in the same way. Horowitz, *Negro and White*. 24. Halpern, *Down on the Killing Floor*. 30.
[23] Baron, "Masculinity."
[24] Boyle, "The Kiss." 504.
[25] Peter Zotek, Interview (Edmonton: 2004).

orders throughout his long career in the city's largest plant, felt that "big" or "husky" men who worked there were not particularly admired: "There was really no glory in it – not that I could see."[26] Similarly, a small wiry man denigrated a former co-worker at the Canada Packers plant who was "a big man" and "bragged" a lot, for "complaining" that the company should only have "big men" working in their department: "Just because he's a bigger man that doesn't mean he's any better than the other guys, you know. That little Johnny knew more work than what that other guy knew."[27] Nevertheless, during oral interviews workers' memories of male co-workers were often structured by a combination of physical appearance, perceived strength, and ethnicity, which suggests that men did not completely reject the physical hierarchy imposed on them by management: Many individuals were remembered as, "a big black guy," "a little Polish guy," "a six-footer," or a French-Canadian who "was pretty well-built."

The disturbing and disgusting nature of many jobs in the labour process made it a challenge for men to avoid a humiliating affront to their dignity, although Edmonton's chronic labour shortages ensured that most people had alternatives. During his first and last day shackling hogs as a new hire at the Swift plant in 1957 John Ewasiw said he discovered, "the pig was just as scared as I was and you would just touch that pig by the heel and it would squeal and run away and splash shit in your face..."[28] Those who stayed on the job day in and day out could not remove the stench of hog excrement and urine from their body. In an interview many years later Ewasiw said he "walked away" after four hours: "I told the

[26] Bill P., Interview.
[27] Jed O., Interview.
[28] John Ewasiw, Interview (Edmonton: 2004).

foreman I needed a job but I didn't need it that badly."[29] The high turnover in Edmonton packinghouses allowed Ewasiw to move to a better job and he ended up staying in the industry for forty years, until the last plant shut down in 1997.

Some men who remained in the most disturbing packing jobs appeared to find it difficult to retain their self-respect. One man who for many years performed the job of stunning hundreds of cattle each day at the Canada Packers plant in Edmonton, quit suddenly to become a bus driver because he could no longer tolerate the work. He only accepted the job of stunner after the foreman talked him into it when no one else would do it.[30] In 1968 a kill floor worker at Canada Packers requested a transfer to the Ham Boning Department because "[I am] always sick and tired, when I get home."[31] The physician for a clinically depressed kill floor worker at Canada Packers in 1977 recommended that the man be moved out of the department because of the particular challenges of "noise, tight time commitments" and the need to function "smoothly" on the kill floor, which suggests he was unable to desensitize himself sufficiently to work in this environment.[32]

Men who could cope with some of the most physically challenging jobs acquired a distinctive pride and prestige. At the Burns plant in the early 1960s Peter Zotek was proud of his ability to haul beef quarters weighing as much as 350 pounds from the loading dock onto railway cars as a beef lugger. He casually dismissed the need to wear "women's Kotex pads" routinely provided by the plant nurse to staunch his bleeding shoulders rubbed raw by the crushing weight: "Yeah, after a week, when it healed and the shoulders got toughened up – it

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[29] *Ibid.*
[30] Roger Bozak, Interview (Edmonton: 2006).
[31] CFAW Local 243, "President's Notes." May 1968
[32] *Ibid.* November 1977

was no problem after that." Zotek derived pride and considerable satisfaction from the fact that when he eventually left the job his replacement lasted only three days: "... on the third day they put a quarter of beef on his shoulders and he just literally sat right down – he was played out, he couldn't take it. He was too light for that job."[33] Elimination of jobs like beef lugger removed important sources of control, pride, and dignity from the workplace for many male workers. When the beef kill was put on an overhead rail the job of beef lugger became one of pushing the carcass on a rail rather than using massive physical strength to lift it. Donato Colangelo, an Italian immigrant who started at the Swift plant in 1966 spoke nostalgically of his early years in the plant. "Well, let's put it this way. In the old days there was not much machinery. We work harder than later on, which we get help from some other equipment to work easier. We were more happy when we work harder than when we were not."[34]

Many packing men also displayed a strong sense of entitlement to having a voice in their workplace rooted in their self-respect as knowledgeable and capable workers. In the 1960s Peter Zotek and co-workers in the Hide Cellar at Burns became "fed up" with management hiring casual workers to handle the extra work during high volume periods. The men "sat down on the hides," refusing to work until Burns agreed to implement a new electrical pulley that was already operating in other local plants to haul the hides mechanically onto a rail to dry. The men felt that the new system reduced management's reliance on casual male workers who had stolen clothing items from permanent workers in the past and posed a threat to full-time jobs. The new technology also cut in half the work

[33] Zotek, Interview. Kotex pads are female sanitary napkins.
[34] Colangelo, Interview Transcript.

time involved and eliminated two of the six permanent jobs in the department. Zotek welcomed the technology because it made the job much easier physically and reduced the stench that had permeated a worker's clothing and body.[35]

Nevertheless, the erosion of skill, worker autonomy, and the need for physical strength from the mechanization of numerous jobs removed important sources of self-esteem for many packing men. In an interview, Harry S., who was hired as an unskilled worker at Edmonton's Swift plant during "the dirty thirties," captured the sense of pride many male workers felt. Harry derived great satisfaction from the butchering skills he acquired on the moving line in the pork cutting department where he trimmed bellies, took the rib out of bellies and trimmed hams – all highly-paid skilled jobs. "I was good at it because I went right to the top and I worked there for forty-nine years, so I must've been – I had somethin' going for me. It wasn't a skill everybody had."[36] Unlike this work, which was not eliminated by restructuring, the new mechanical hide-puller introduced in the 1960s rendered obsolete the highly skilled knife work from which the floorsman had gained both pride and a substantial wage premium.[37] Working on a disassembly line controlled by management where the butchering process was reduced to a single cutting motion took much personal satisfaction from the work, contributing to rising levels of alienation with industry restructuring in the 1960s and 70s.

Packing men's pride and self-respect were bolstered by the remarkable contract gains they secured during the era of national bargaining. **[Table 1]** The male breadwinner ideal,

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[35] Peter Zotek, Telephone Interview (Edmonton: 2005).
[36] Harry S., Helen S., and Irene S., Interview.
[37] The mechanized system was only efficient at high-capacity cattle slaughter plants like the Edmonton Swift plant, which adopted it in 1964. MacLachlan, *Kill and Chill.* 172-3

which had long been an important goal of skilled tradesmen, became central to notions of male working-class respectability among semi-skilled and unskilled men in unions during the postwar years after new labour legislation gave organized labour new legitimacy and the ability to fight for higher wages.[38] American historian Robert Griswold has demonstrated that throughout the twentieth century across all social classes, "male breadwinning has been synonymous with maturity, respectability, and masculinity."[39] By the 1950s contract gains had brought this ideal – previously only attainable by highly skilled craft workers – within closer reach for all Edmonton packing men. Most families were able to buy a car, own their home, and put their children through high school or even, in many cases, postsecondary education. Gerry Beauchamp, a former president of the Swift local, expressed the pride many workers felt about once being among the highest paid manual workers in the city, and their sense of loss when wages declined significantly after national bargaining collapsed in 1984: "when I first started there we were the third industry, you know, the top third – so Imperial Oil was first, CPR was second and the packinghouse was third in wages, in '52. But in the '70s, then we started going down, and in the '80s we really went down."[40] The fact that in most packing families the female partner also worked for wages -- Gerry Beauchamp's wife worked full time -- did little to compromise the sense of self-esteem and respectability packing men derived from their ability to secure significant wage gains.

The goal of male breadwinning was an important influence during the 1970s when Alberta packing workers saw their wages threatened by rising inflation. The need to keep up

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[38] Mark Rosenfeld found that among skilled running-trades workers in early to mid-twentieth-century Ontario the ability to earn a family wage "confirmed their masculinity and underpinned the patriarchal power they might exercise in the family." Rosenfeld, "'It Was a Hard Life'." 258.
[39] Robert L. Griswold, *Fatherhood in America: A History* (New York: BasicBooks, 1993). 2
[40] Beauchamp, Interview.

with dramatic wage gains in the local construction and oil industries fueled the militancy of Edmonton packing men in the 1974 and 1978 labour disputes. Packing men were particularly concerned about how their income compared with that of men in other industries because so much of their respectability as male packing workers – who were mostly white, married, and middle-aged in the 1970s – was invested in earning a good wage.

Nevertheless, a significant number of male workers chose jobs that gave them some control over their work rather than higher paying jobs. Some men studiously avoided line work because they valued even small amounts of control a worker could exercise on the job. For Gerry Beauchamp, who was hired at Swifts in 1952, nothing management offered could compensate for the restrictiveness and tedium of working on the line. Beauchamp worked on the loading dock where he said he was "getting paid pretty good" and was "comfortable" with what he was paid: "At least on the dock when there's work you work and when there's not too much then you get the truckers comin' in and you can bullshit with them for a little. At least you're not standing in one particular spot. That makes a big difference."[41] John Ewasiw also disliked the relentlessness of line work: "You know, on a line that was moving electrically, a power line, like the hogs when you're killing them – it's on a chain and every two seconds or five seconds another hog comes and whatever somebody has to do to it, pull the beef lard or cut the foot off or split it, whatever, they're just there and it comes and you gotta do it." He preferred non-line jobs like pushing boxes by hand in shipping, which he did before the system was almost fully mechanized. Similarly, as a beef lugger Ewasiw said, "you had control of how often you carried the beef and if you were tired you waited an extra

[41] *Ibid.*

half a minute or so."[42] In a 1997 interview John Ventura, a union activist who started working at Swift's Edmonton plant in 1974, emphasized that it was having some control in the workplace, not money, that was the most distinctive aspect of the national bargaining era: "Basically the biggest thing that we seen there was the money was a little bit better, but the most important thing was you got treated like a person. If there was a safety concern there was a mechanism to try and get your issue heard."[43]

The decent wages and relative job security that came with union power also made packing men more likely to protect their bodies from injury. For those who could not avoid the line, male-dominated departments were quite disciplined in resisting management's efforts to make them work flat out, which would cause repetitive strain and back injuries. This self-protective attitude contrasts with the findings of researchers who have examined the attitude of meatpacking and other workers in the late twentieth century when unions had lost their power.[44] In a study of mid-western American construction workers in the 1990s after the union had been weakened, Kris Paap found that male workers were unwilling to observe safety rules because the risk of job loss from taking the extra time required to work safely was too high.[45] In comparison, Edmonton packing workers were politicized around health and safety issues, particularly in the 1960s and 70s as management sped up the line and reduced the degree of worker control through mechanization. At Canada Packers in 1968 male beef cooler workers filed a petition against their foreman for a number of reasons, one

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[42] Ewasiw, Interview.
[43] John Ventura, Interview Transcript (Edmonton: Alberta Labour History Institute/Ground Zero, 1998).
[44] Joel Novek, "The Labour Process and Workplace Injuries in the Canadian Meat Packing Industry," *The Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology* 29, no. 1 (1992).
[45] Kris Paap, *Working Construction: Why White Working-Class Men Put Themselves--and the Labor Movement-- in Harm's Way* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2006).

of which was that he "displays [an] anti-safety attitude."[46] Two years later the union man who was chair of the Safety Committee at Canada Packers in Edmonton, resigned to protest lack of management action on safety issues identified by the union.[47]

Rigid gender segregation of Edmonton packing departments through even the 1970s seemed to make it easier for male workers to maintain their sense of entitlement to a say in their workplace, especially when it came to safety. This impression is reinforced by contrasting packinghouse workers in Edmonton with those studied by anthropologist Debra Fink in mid-western America during the 1990s. Fink found that in this later era when women had gained more significant access to "male" jobs and job security was compromised by the collapse of union power, male workers were less willing than women workers to report injuries because, "only women whined about sore hands." Instead, younger male workers "felt challenged to work through the pain that compelled women to pull back. The virtues of strength, endurance, and sacrifice are part of a twentieth-century U.S. construction of manhood, and IBP provided a setting in which to act out these principles."[48] Since both Paap and Fink actually worked in the environment that they were researching, their findings are compelling. It is unclear whether Edmonton packing men reported injuries less often than women, but my interviews suggest that women were more willing to discuss their own injuries, while men tended to discuss the injuries suffered by other workers, particularly the most ghastly injuries. This gender distinction may be related to packing men's need to project an image of toughness and strength, rather than weakness and vulnerability, yet at the same time legitimize worker concerns about the dangers of the packinghouse environment.

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[46] CFAW Local 243, "President's Notes." 28 February 1968.
[47] *Ibid.* May 1970
[48] Fink, *Cutting into the Meatpacking Line*. 110

The tendency for male workers to prize control in the workplace more than wage gains is also clear from their response to the flattened wage hierarchy that developed under national pattern bargaining. Management found that the wage differential was no longer sufficient to convince workers to fill the most disturbing or disgusting jobs. This privileging of worker control bears some similarity to the "craft sensibility" that Joy Parr discovered among Hanover furniture workers who favoured an industrial union that strove to help them retain some control in the workplace, over a craft union focused on increasing productivity to shore up the role of male workers as breadwinners. [49]

With such a strong sense of entitlement and self-respect why did so many packing men resort to the use of abusive, at times physically violent behaviour to strengthen their position, particularly when respectability was so central to their workplace claims? Just like the Victorian working-class men described by Peter Bailey, Edmonton packing men embraced rough behaviour and respectability selectively, "to extract material and social benefits."[50] They donned the middle-class suit jacket in negotiations and at union conventions to assert their self-perceived position as equals with capital and bolster their demand for a decent wage.[51] Yet many packing men could just as easily discard respectability for subterfuge, sarcasm, verbal abuse, and physical aggression in daily encounters to assert their dignity and control as new technologies restructured the industry, mocking management's presumption of expertise, efficiency and moral superiority. Here I draw on Christopher Dummitt's understanding of "the manly modern" as a construction of middle-class masculinity in the post-1945 decades defined by order, rationality, the notion of

[49] Parr, *Gender of Breadwinners*. 149
[50] Bailey, "'Will the Real Bill Banks Please Stand Up?'." 348.
[51] Guard, "Womanly Innocence." 120.

progress, and control. Edmonton packing men tended to reject key aspects of this understanding of manhood that related to their subordination in the workplace, but embraced the project of reasserting a patriarchal order that was also central to the manly modern.[52] Rough behaviours were also often the currency of the shop floor and union hall in moments of conflict among workers and between workers and union leaders. Edmonton packing men retained a complex notion of packing masculinity that encompassed respectable and rough behaviours, both of which could be seen as acceptable and effective.

The intense heat and humidity in which many men performed difficult or mind-numbingly simple tasks no doubt frayed tempers, contributing to the sometimes vicious incidents that have been documented. Union minutes reveal at least twenty incidents of "fighting" and more than a dozen cases of verbal abuse or harassment, as well as eight cases of horseplay, compared to only a handful of similar incidents prior to the mid-1960s.[53] A disproportionate number of incidents occurred at the Swift plant, but Hampson's off-hand tone about the cases of fighting he mentions during the early period suggests that he saw the behaviour as unremarkable. In a 1955 report to the national director Hampson's focus is clearly on the electoral battle, not the physical altercation that erupted during a local meeting about how to raise union dues: ""This was an excelently [sic] attended meeting and was a real ding-dong battle. Formanski gave a very good account of himself and after one man

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[52] Dummitt, *The Manly Modern.*

[53] The asymmetrical nature of textual sources available prevents me from determining with any certainty whether there was an increase in rough behaviours among packinghouse men during the later period of accelerated industry restructuring. Union minutes, which are available only for the two largest plants, and only for the years after 1966, provide a more richly textured portrait of plant life than the monthly staff reports written by Alberta UPWA representative Jack Hampson that dominate the textual record in the earlier period. CFAW Local 243, "President's Notes; Canada Packers Local 243, "Officers' Meeting Minutes 1967-1970; ———, "GMM Minutes 1966-1973," (Edmonton: UFCW Local 1118). When I conducted this research archived union staff reports were available only for the period before 1967.

being thrown out, and a fistfight, the vote to accept the referendum went in favor 3 to 1."[54] In oral interviews male workers downplayed the significance of altercations, explaining that most physical fights lasted only a few seconds or minutes and were never reported, which suggests that even union records greatly under-represent the behaviour.[55] This diversity of sources demonstrates that physical and emotional violence were important vehicles by which many packing men collectively constructed and enforced a dominant notion of working-class masculinity on the shop floor and in the union hall.

The incidences of fighting, assaults, verbal abuse, and harassment, as well as horseplay among men between 1967 and 1979, also revealed class and ethnic tensions on the shop floor. The incidents of "fighting" ranged from "scuffles" that resulted in no notable injury or damage, to broken glasses, a bruised back, torn clothing, and, in the most serious case, the loss of an eye.[56] Workers used physical aggression to defend masculine status and prestige in an increasingly competitive environment. A number used verbal abuse to express frustration with management, which usually resulted in disciplinary action that reaffirmed management control. Workers or their shop steward told a foreman to "go to hell" or "go climb up a rope," or were disciplined simply for "using packinghouse language" – a stream of profanities. This offense usually brought a one- or two-day suspension, which was a significant financial penalty and suggests that disrespectful language effectively challenged class power on the shop floor.

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[54] Hampson, "Alberta Staff Reports, Locals 233-511." Swift Local 283, 19 August 1955.
[55] Gerry Beauchamp, Telephone Interview (Edmonton: 2005); *Frank and *Winnifred, Telephone Interview (Edmonton: 2005).
[56] Swift Local 280, "Swift GMM Minutes." February 1967. Canada Packers Local 243, "Officers' Meeting Minutes 1967-1970; ———, "GMM Minutes 1966-1973."

Workers who had escaped the most demeaning types of work and who did not conform to rough masculine packinghouse behaviour seem to have posed a threat to the rough shop floor culture that was a source of pride and power to some men. An unassuming male worker at one Edmonton packinghouse in the 1970s who made deliveries throughout the plant was subjected to teasing, mocking, and jeering over a three-year period. At one point his harasser repeatedly spat on the back of the man's neck while he had coffee in the plant cafeteria, and followed him as he moved from table to table to escape his attacker. In the grievance record the victimized man could not bring himself to write the word fart, instead writing out "f _ _ t" to describe one of the noises made around him by his harassers.[57] Mocking questions about "the future President" and "paper stretcher" suggest that the victim's clean dry job making deliveries throughout the plant, combined with a quiet, unassuming and gentlemanly nature may have made him a target for the abuse.[58] It is possible he was even viewed as effeminate within the context of the hyper-masculine shop floor of the packinghouse, although he was married with children.

Another case of rough behaviour recalled by a former worker in an interview, affirms the centrality of work to the masculine identity of packinghouse workers. George, a former foreman, explained that a trucker who was trying to earn extra hours as a beef lugger suffered serious injury when his male co-workers, "jealous because he's gonna take their work or something," lifted a section from a full beef carcass just as he was lugging it into a boxcar.

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[57] In a telephone interview with me after I discovered documentary evidence of this harassment, the man who was victimized rejected the term "harassment," which I had used to describe it. He downplayed the incident and refused to discuss it any further. *Ibid.* 17 August 1972.

[58] "Packinghouse language" was a term a number of workers used during interviews to describe the profanity that was common on the shop floor. In an interview the male worker targetted in this vicious incident of extended harassment chose not to elaborate on shop floor profanity for me because he felt it was inappropriate for "a lady." Class, gender and age differences undoubtedly limited what he would share with me during the interview. CFAW Local 243, "President's Notes." 10 September 1969.

Removing much of the weight so suddenly when the man was straining forward caused the lugger to smash into a wall of the boxcar, "and he's still crippled today."[59] In this instance the man who recalled the incident seemed most critical of the trucker, who he felt should have known better than to try to take work away from other packing men who were protecting their job.

Yet the rough masculine culture of the shop floor could also be an important source of intergenerational mentorship and bonding. Initiation rites, such as making a new worker do all the heavy lifting in a job, were designed to weed out workers who might compromise union strength, according to a former worker who started at the Swift plant in 1969. Dave Mercer explained that this was not "a harmful thing" but "a form of bonding" that allowed veteran workers to size up "new rookies" and see if they could "cut it" in the department, which meant being able to cope with the rough culture of the shop floor and stand up to management. Mercer, who had no experience with unions before arriving at Swift, was "fascinated" by paternalistic male "characters" in the department who "were sincere, very strong unionists, and very hard workers. They were raising families, trying to pay for mortgages, and save for the kids to go on to university. I think in their minds they didn't want their kids working at a packing plant." These "fatherly figures," who "would say, enough's enough" to prevent initiation rites from getting out of hand, influenced Mercer with stories at coffee break about how the union began at Swift and the struggles to achieve the wage rates that attracted him to the industry: "it had a huge impression on a young guy 17 years of age." The powerful influence of older packing men profoundly affected David Mercer's career path. After five years of increasing involvement in the union, Mercer was

[59] *George, Interview.

encouraged by union leaders in his local to attend the Labor College of Canada in Montreal under the sponsorship of the union, which paid for his schooling and his wages. The experience inspired him to attend university, become a labour lawyer, and represent the Swift local until it closed in 1997. Mercer continues to practice labour law in the city today.[60]

Horseplay and pranks were another form of bonding and resistance in Edmonton packing plants that asserted a distinctive packing masculinity. As Lisa Fine discovered in her study of American auto workers, these activities "connected workers in a bond of transgression" that deepened class and gender divisions.[61] In 1971 the Chief Steward at Swift reported to the general union membership that the company had warned it would not tolerate "throwing of stuff and product" and that "violators" would be "reprimanded." This company warning came amidst a series of incidents that resulted in formal reprimands "for absenteeism, fighting, refusal to get haircuts and not doing their work properly," signaling heightened tensions on the shop floor.[62] Yet Bruce P.'s anecdotes about his years on the male-dominated kill floor at Canada Packers in the late 1970s illustrate the sense of power male workers gained from antics in the workplace. Bruce delighted in the ability of the kill floor gang to covertly exact a fast food lunch from the company while on the job.

> ... the sides of beef were goin' 'round and it was gettin' close to lunch time and the guys were gettin' hungry and so they'd trim a little bit off and we have these sterilizers, where we used to dip the knives in and stuff and they'd wrap the meat in some plastic bags or whatever and dip'em in there and we'd have a feast! One

[60] Dave Mercer, Interview Transcript (Edmonton: Alberta Labour History Institute/Ground Zero, 1998).
[61] Fine, *The Story of Reo Joe*. 136.
[62] Swift Local 280, "Swift GMM Minutes." 2 February 1971; 7 September 1971.

> guy actually had his own spices and everything else – it was really good.[63]

In a separate incident the union's ability to reinstate Bruce's male co-worker, after the man accidentally drenched a supervisor when aiming for Bruce during a "waterfight" on the kill floor, demonstrated the camaraderie in highly gendered departments that was central to male class cohesion and union resistance to management: "A guy could soak down a supervisor and get hired back. Well that's a pretty good union."[64]

Some young male workers attempted physically risky pranks to reinforce or protect their manliness. In one case a young man hung himself upside down by the feet in the rafters of the female-dominated Table Ready Meats area, bringing the department to a standstill while someone timed him. The fact that his father was the affable and well-liked Vince Westacott, who held a position in management (and was chagrined by the incident), may help explain the youth's confident bravado among his co-workers.[65]

Subordinating Women

Patriarchal assumptions were integral to the dominant notion of packing masculinity in Edmonton packinghouses. A working-class man's respectability as a family breadwinner was as important as his perceived superior strength, ability, and stamina, for justifying strategies that excluded, controlled, and subordinated women workers. During the immediate postwar period most male workers supported privileged access to jobs for returning war veterans, a marriage bar for women only, gendered job segregation and departmental

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[63] Bruce P., Interview.
[64] *Ibid.*
[65] Westacott and Westacott, Interview.

seniority lists. The attitude of men toward women workers is captured by an elderly former Swift worker, Harry S., who expressed resentment in an interview some sixty years later, about the "independence" of women packing workers in the immediate postwar years, who often turned down a date: "Women that worked in the plant there, they got to be too god darn...I don't know what word to use but, ah, they got too independent ... you had a hard time to get a date. That's a fact. They had money and they didn't care to go out with a guy."[66]

The predominance of East Europeans in Edmonton plants, particularly Ukrainians, helped reinforce patriarchal understandings of respectable packinghouse masculinity because of their political history. Frances Swyripa has demonstrated that as a stateless and oppressed minority in Canada during much of the twentieth century, Ukrainian-Canadians were preoccupied with the dual political goals of an independent Ukraine in Europe and a secure place in Canadian society. As a result, the male-dominated cultural leadership "subordinated women and women's rights and issues to the interests of the group and the nation" and made "mothering and homemaking women's major function."[67] According to Joan Sangster Ukrainian men on the left displayed more paternalistic attitudes than some ethnic groups into the postwar era, which created "immense material and cultural obstacles" to the political engagement of Ukrainian-Canadian women compared to other women on the left.[68] These political and cultural factors, given the predominance of Ukrainian-Canadian men in

[66] Harry S., Helen S., and Irene S., Interview.
[67] Swyripa, *Wedded to the Cause*. viii
[68] Joan Sangster, *Dreams of Equality: Women on the Canadian Left 1920-1950* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1989). 230

Edmonton packinghouses, help explain a pronounced gender conservatism among packing men in Edmonton.

A male worker's perception that he earned a family wage reinforced patriarchal attitudes and behaviours in the household. It was especially easy for packing men who started work in the 1940s and 50s, to see themselves as primary wage earners because enforcement of a marriage bar meant their wives worked for wages only part time and sporadically, often from the home, fitting their wage-earning around the demands of child-rearing. By the 1960s the growing number of married women in the packinghouse – including those with young children – began to shift the attitudes of a younger generation of men who were sometimes married to a packing worker. Peter Zotek, who began working at the Burns plant in 1960 at the age of twenty and a year later married a woman who worked at the Swift plant, felt married women made good workers because "they had more responsibility so they were at work every day." When equal pay and integration of male and female seniority lists occurred in the 1970s, not surprisingly, he was among those men who supported it.

> The way I looked at it, if the woman could do the man's job, why shouldn't she be allowed the same rate of pay? ... my wife, when we got married, well every winter, for about maybe ten years, ... soon as it got slack, she got laid off, but the men stayed, which wasn't right. There was guys that had one-year or two-years seniority and she had already ten, so why should she be laid off when she can do the job and the guy's staying?[69]

[69] Zotek, Interview.

Zotek was quick to acknowledge the importance of his wife's paycheque, which allowed the couple, who married with no resources, to put a downpayment on a house four years after they married. But the growing number of packing men whose wives worked full-time most often chose to retain a traditional gender division of labour in the home.

Rough male behaviours around women on the shop floor, particularly harassment, "packinghouse language," physical aggression, and verbal abuse, were vehicles for asserting male privilege and control. The behaviours discouraged women from venturing into male departments, allowing men to dominate the vast majority of jobs, particularly skilled and supervisory positions.[70] American anthropologist Debra Fink, who studied mid-western packing workers, found: "The sexual saturation of the work environment was men's effective way of resisting women's entry into their space. Through their control of women's reputations they were able to retain power in both the worksite and the union locals, even as women entered and pressed limited claims to jobs and wages."[71] The use of profanity, which was more common among male workers, compromised the respectability of women who worked nearby and risked being seen as "tough" if they could handle it. Nevertheless in one case a male workers' use of physical aggression with a woman backfired spectacularly. In the 1950s a male worker in the Casings Department at Swift "was loud-mouthing" a woman co-worker and either pushed or struck her when she talked back to him, triggering a brawl. According to Vince and Mary Westacott, who related the incident many years later, when he "swung back at her" all the women nearby "piled in on him." The Westacotts said the

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[70] According to a 1981 national survey, women held less than five per cent of skilled and semi-skilled jobs such as Meat Boner (1.5%), All-Around Butcher (5%), Carcass Splitter (0.7%), Meat Chopper (1%), Animal Skinner (0.8%), and Meat Trimmer (3%). It is not possible to tell whether these figures represent a significant increase because similar figures are not available for earlier years. Canada, *Wage Rates, Salaries, and Hours of Labour, 1947-1983.*

[71] Fink, "What Kind of Woman." 256

women "actually beat him up" and he quit two days later because "he felt so embarrassed," despite an attempt by management to keep the incident quiet. The man had worked at Swift for more than ten years but never returned to the packing plant.[72] The humiliation he experienced from being defeated by women in a physical contest demonstrates how deeply a packing man's pride and dignity were invested in notions of male dominance and superior strength.

Sexuality was also used by male workers to dominate the shop floor. On the Canada Packers assembly line in the late 1970s a number of jokes played on workers, particularly female "rookies," helped enforce gender norms. Beverly P., who started working at the plant in 1977 at the age of 19, remembers when some male workers packed "the boobs off of the pig" in a box of meat to be discovered by another male worker before it was packed. Toying with a highly sexualized female part of the animal reinforced the masculine culture of the workplace in a predominantly female department. Some male workers made a crude pass at a woman worker by sending a pig's tail packed in a box down the line to her. Co-workers told the woman "so and so sent you the piece of tail down there, didn't you see that?"[73] In this context a "piece of tail," with its clear allusion to sexual intercourse, demonstrated a male worker's heterosexual virility at the woman worker's expense.[74]

Competing Masculinities

A dominant notion of packing masculinity also developed in response to alternative masculinities as men jockeyed for position in a highly unstable hierarchy of masculinities within the packinghouse during the postwar era. Packing men defined themselves in

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[72] Westacott and Westacott, Interview.
[73] Beverly P., Interview.
[74] www.wordwebonline.com/en/PIECEOFTAIL

opposition to white-collar workers, deriving enormous pride and self-respect from knowing they out-earned many of them. Fred, a skilled tradesman whose involvement in union negotiations gave him access to wage rates among unionized and non-unionized employees in the plant, captured this feeling most effectively:

> ...management were what we called the white-collar jobs, eh? And they led us labourers to believe that they were making umpteen times the money that we were making. But I learned exactly where I stood. Like these so-called white-collar workers that had led me to believe that they were making so much more money than I was. I was exposed to the information and I was making over ten times what these people were making! So I just played that right to the top.[75]

As we saw in Chapter Two, one white-collar male worker reacted to his situation by using the union's power and higher wages to depict unionized workers as rough and irresponsible. There is no evidence that William's criticism had much impact on blue-collar packing workers. If anything, these arguments, which seem designed to affirm white-collar rationalism, efficiency, and emotional restraint, reinforced the use of aggressive masculinity as the most effective vehicle for securing wage gains. There were several attempts to organize office workers in Edmonton packinghouses, but they all failed, apparently because of company pressure.[76] But resistance may also have been linked to office workers' need to distance themselves from the rough working-class image of packing men to maintain their

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[75] *Fred and *Mary, Interview.

[76] Office workers at Canada Packers who were initially somewhat receptive to UPWA organizers in 1951, cooled to the idea of organizing after the company held a meeting with them. Their stock response to union organizers became: "The company is treating us pretty good and we are doing alright." Jack Hampson, "Report on Organizing Canada Packers Office Staff," (LAC, MG 28 I-186, CFAW fonds, PWOC and UPWA series, Vol. 24, Alberta Staff Reports 1951-55, General and Locals 233-511 1951).

own middle-class respectability.[77] Office workers at the Canada Packers' plant refused to organize unless white-collar workers in the other three packinghouses were also unionized.[78] This suggests that the potential risks to status and position were greater than the perceived benefits a union could offer if white-collar workers at Canada Packers were the only ones to organize in the local packing industry. As a result packinghouse office workers were left with primarily a "public and psychological wage" deriving from the lighter, cleaner, and purportedly more skilled work they performed. They also benefited from the higher social status of office workers who were almost exclusively white Anglo-Celtic Canadian compared to the lower ranked east and south Europeans who dominated the production workforce.[79]

Yet Chapter Two also demonstrated that some white-collar packing men accommodated themselves to the power and influence of unionized workers, which raised the status and self-esteem of packing workers. Gerry Beauchamp, president of the Swift local during the 1970s, whose first wife worked in the office at Burns, felt that most office workers respected unionized workers because they earned such good wages. Only "a few" seemed to feel that they were better than production workers.[80] The combination of good wages, a complex bargaining system that involved a network of people outside of Edmonton, and

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[77] In her study of workers at the large hydro utility, BC Hydro in British Columbia, Gillian Creese found that male white-collar workers rejected the "blue-collar working-class norms of masculinity and aggressive styles of trade unionism." Creese, *Contracting Masculinity*. 84

[78] Jack Hampson, "Report on Canada Packers Local 243-Office Workers," (LAC, MG 28 I-186, CFAW fonds, PWOC and UPWA series, Vol. 24, Alberta Staff Reports 1951-55, Canada Packers Local 243, 1951).

[79] The term "psychological wage" is adapted from the work of David Roediger and those influenced by him, including Kris Paap, who uses the term to describe the sense of superiority white construction workers derived from social processes such as hazing and jokes in late twentieth century mid-western America. She explains that these processes construct merit in ways that, "reinforce the value of whiteness and masculinity" by equating them with skill and competence. David R. Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (London ; New York: Verso, 1991). Paap, *Working Construction: Why White Working-Class Men Put Themselves--and the Labor Movement-- in Harm's Way*. 78.

[80] Beauchamp, Interview.

national-scale strike action fostered a self-image among male production workers that was in many ways equal to white-collar workers. The fact that I received repeated promptings from union leaders to include white-collar Swift manager Vince Westacott in the interviews for this research suggests that union leaders valued their strong relationship with a management figure because it enhanced the union's respectability and was a testament to its power. The amiable and well-liked Westacott received free help and sometimes building supplies for his home and cabin from the plant through packinghouse workers, which helped supplement an income that was barely adequate to support his wife and seven sons. Westacott acknowledged that he had an unusual rapport with production men: "I had kind of a preference at the meat packing plant ... I got along real well with the people at Swifts. Anything I wanted ... they were real good to me."[81] Packing men's willingness to help Westacott with the material needs of his family may have stemmed in part from his status as a respectable family breadwinner with heavy responsibilities, a value they held in common. But the office worker's own gregarious personality and genuine respect for workers also seems to have been a factor.

Skilled tradesmen comprised a separate group of men within the packing workforce who gauged their masculinity by their earning power in relation to tradesmen in other industries, which generated considerable discontent. The union's initial bargaining strategy of raising the wages of the lowest paid workers the most, which dramatically narrowed the wage gap between them and skilled workers in the 1940s and 50s, created considerable

[81] In 1986 during the violent Gainer strike Vince Westacott said owner Peter Pocklington was astounded when the office worker was able to cycle to work and get through the picket line unharmed. Union leaders had warned Westacott against driving his car to the plant because of the risk of damage and guaranteed his personal safety. Westacott and Westacott, Interview.

frustration for engineers. Unlike butchers, who could not compare as easily across industries, engineers were highly aware that men with their training earned significantly more in other industries, especially the oil industry in Alberta. Although the union had reversed this trend by the 1960s, in 1966 these tradesmen still earned sixty-five cents less than engineers in the oil industry.[82]

Packing masculinity was also entwined with the relational notion of whiteness, particularly by the 1970s when a growing number of immigrants seen as non-white began to arrive in Edmonton packinghouses as the industry was destabilized by restructuring.[83] The workforce dominated by middle-aged first-, and second-generation East European men – especially Ukrainians – who only recently had been accepted as "white" in Edmonton society, began to feel their power and status as packing workers threatened.[84] These workers distinguished themselves from new immigrants, particularly refugees, by emphasizing their own willingness to fight through the union for better wages and working conditions, and by representing themselves as protectors of a respectable Canadian standard of living that the newcomers could not uphold because of their experience of impoverishment. As one male worker of Ukrainian heritage explained, "The Asians started to come in when there was a two-tier system – when the white man wouldn't work for $7.50 an hour and the Asians and the Africans and the Punjabs and the East Indians, they would."[85]

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[82] Hampson, "Alberta Staff Reports, Locals 233-511." Burns Local 233, 20 April 1953; 18 June 1953, 24 August 1954, 26 October 1954. Canada Packers Local 243, "Edmonton Area Engineers Wage Survey." (LAC, CFAW fonds, MG 28 I-186, PWOC and UPWA series, Vol 58, Wage Schedules Canada Packers, 1957-59). ———, "GMM Minutes 1966-1973."

[83] Palmer and Palmer, *Peoples of Alberta.*

[84] Potrebenko, *No Streets of Gold.* 26

[85] A two-tiered system of wage rates with significantly lower wage rates for new hires was introduced under Peter Pocklington in 1984. Gardner, "The Gainers Strike." 39

The rising number of workers seen as non-white in Edmonton packinghouses during Alberta's economic boom in the 1970s appeared to create racial tension among male workers. One altercation occurred at the Canada Packers plant between an Asian foreman and a non-Asian worker who pointed out problems with one of the roasters in the rendering department where they both worked. The foreman resented his subordinate's critical comments and elbowed him in the ribs, instigating a brawl. Another worker, who was also Asian, grabbed the non-Asian worker and held him so that the Asian supervisor could continue hitting him in the face. The non-Asian worker escaped to resume the fight until his supervisor grabbed a shovel, at which point he fled.[86] Although underlying motives for the fight and its outcome are unclear, the incident suggests that racial identity was central to working-class masculinity on the shop floor, and could trump class bonds. It also indicates that violence was a vehicle readily used by some packing men to work out class and ethnic tensions on the shop floor.

Immigration status and sexuality were also central to male pride, and could be mobilized to score social points in an increasingly competitive and alienating environment. In 1977 a man on the hog trim line at Canada Packers triggered a "fight" when he threatened his co-worker by gesturing at the man's "crotch" with his work knife after being called "a little DP."[87] DP was a derogatory term applied to displaced persons from Europe after World War Two that likely came into use again because of the rising number of refugee immigrants who arrived in Edmonton during the late 1970s, particularly Vietnamese people.[88] The offended man's vehement response, "I paid my way," and threat to emasculate the man who

[86] CFAW Local 243, "President's Notes." 17 August 1977.
[87] *Ibid.* 26 August 1977.
[88] The number of Vietnamese people arriving in Edmonton annually rose from two hundred in 1976 to more than 3,000 by 1979 following the fall of South Vietnam. Edmonton's population was approaching 500,000 during this period. Palmer and Palmer, *Peoples of Alberta*. 445, 451. *Canada Year Book*, ed. Census and Statistics Office (Ottawa: Statistics Canada, 1976).

slandered him, demonstrates the close connection between masculinity, class, and sexuality for male packing workers.

Some East European male workers used racist notions about respectability and rough behaviour to distinguish themselves from workers of colour, such as jokes, terms like "nigger," and derogatory stereotypes. Asked why so few Aboriginals or blacks worked in the packinghouse one Ukrainian-Canadian man responded that, in the case of Aboriginals, "they go to drink you know." His comment implicitly contrasted a stereotype of Aboriginal peoples as morally weak and dissolute with the image of respectable self-discipline and control that non-Aboriginal Canadians have cultivated to legitimize the displacement of First Nations peoples from their ancestral land.[89] A male Ukrainian-Canadian worker disparaged one of the few black men who worked in the packinghouse during his own long career, saying he was "a very nice guy" and "for a black guy he was pretty good looking." He then suggested that the black worker told exaggerated "stories" about his sexual exploits and extravagances on trips to exotic cities. The Ukrainian-Canadian packing man saw himself as racially tolerant, but his comments implied the existence of a racial hierarchy within which most blacks are not considered good looking, and contrasted the purported hubris and sexual impropriety of black men with, by implication, white male sexual respectability. Similarly, an anecdote related by a Ukrainian-Canadian who was a former foreman, about black and Chinese men being prone to violence and carrying knives on the streets of Edmonton, drew on popular stereotypes that reinforce an image of white men as respectable and non-violent.[90]

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[89] See Sarah Carter, *Aboriginal People and Colonizers of Western Canada to 1900* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999).

[90] I elected not to identify several quotations out of consideration for still living people.

In separate interviews two second-generation Ukrainian-Canadian men linked African-Americans with meekness and exploitation in very different ways that, nevertheless, made explicit a notion of autonomy and self-respect that was seen as characteristic of white packing manhood. In one interview a former Burns worker denigrated "blacks" from "Mississippi" for saying "how high?" when management "cracked the whip." Constructing American blacks as docile and obedient helped assert an image of white packing workers, the vast majority of whom were men, as highly autonomous and self-respecting, and implied that this made them resistant to exploitation. In the other interview a former Canada Packers worker said with great pride that he and the men in his department "worked like niggers" to make their area of the plant one of the cleanest and most efficient. Even though this comment was used to depict an extraordinary work effort – the exact opposite of the previous man's comment – it conveyed a similar sense of independent thought and dignity because this worker clearly chose to work effectively. Both men's allusions to African-American slaves reinforced a hegemonic notion of white packing manhood as highly self-determining.

In the late 1960s one skilled worker at an Edmonton packinghouse who was seen as non-white chose to become heavily involved in two male middle-class community fraternities, at least one of which explicitly disallowed the discussion of politics as well as religion. The timing of the tradesman's decision coincided with the rising number of non-white workers in the packinghouse, as well as an increase in workplace tensions between labour and management in response to increasing mechanization and speed-ups. Shifting his focus toward highly esteemed community organizations may have been a way of negotiating his more vulnerable masculine respectability as a tradesman who was seen as non-white at a time of rising class and racial tensions and pervasive rough behaviour in the packinghouse.

A persistent gap between the wages of tradesmen in Edmonton's packing industry relative to what tradesmen earned in other industries, particularly the oil and gas industry, may have deepened his sense of vulnerability. Nevertheless, an African-American who worked in one of the local packinghouses for forty years, from before the union arrived, felt that the degree of discrimination in Edmonton plants was minimal "compared to State-side" where blacks were relegated to the most unpleasant jobs.

The diversity of ethnic identities within the context of fairly recent European immigration and mid-twentieth century global politics often triggered rough behaviour among male workers to assert status. Tensions between male Polish and Ukrainian workers stemming from European events posed problems for union organizers during the war and inter-ethnic hostilities persisted long after the war ended.[91] In a 1960 incident involving men who used anti-semitic and anti-German insults to hurt each other at the Gainer plant, the UPWA staff representative reporting the incident made it clear "uncomplimentary remarks" were common between packinghouse workers.[92] This suggests that ethnicity and religion were important aspects of identity for establishing rank among men in the packinghouse.

Heterosexism was central to packing masculinity, which made the shop floor and the union hall hostile environments for gay men and lesbian women. One woman who worked at the Swift plant for nineteen years in the 1950s and 60s could remember no same sex men or women: "If there was they were not out of the closet."[93] Another female worker who worked in the same plant from the mid-1970s until the 1990s, suspected that several men and women were gay or lesbian. She felt they hid their sexual identity because the men in the plant

[91] Bain, "Ufaw's Development". 64
[92] Hampson, "Alberta Staff Reports, Locals 243-363 ". Local 319, 14 February 1960.
[93] Kereliuk, Telephone Interview I.

"would have given them an awful time. They'd harass them – especially at that time. They'd bully them. They bullied women, they would bully them!"[94]

Reinforcing Packinghouse Masculinity

Packing men drew selectively on the culture around them in ways that both capitalized on and reinforced a packinghouse masculinity that garnered social power and material rewards. A male packinghouse worker in Canada Packers' Toronto plant achieved the title of "Mr. Canada" in 1967 for being "the Canadian male with the best set of muscles and the finest over-all physical development." **[Figure 11]** In an article published in the union's national newsletter, Michael Galea was described as a man "built like a well designed concrete blockhouse. He has muscles on muscles." The union's celebration of Galea's national title achievement, which included two photographs and detail about his work-out routine, his diet, and his plan to compete for "Mr. Universe" in 1968, suggests that male physical strength was highly valued among packing men. There is no mention of the work he performed in the packinghouse, or whether his day-to-day work played any role in his achievement, although one of the photographs indicates he performed some kind of knife work on the beef kill, a particularly masculine domain. The tone and approach of the article indicate tremendous respect for Galea's ability to develop such a "superbly-knit frame" – a physique that would have represented tremendous status and power among packinghouse workers.[95]

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[94] *Margaret, Interview.

[95] "Mr. Canada," *Canadian Packinghouse Worker*. According to Stephen H. Norwood as corporations became more bureaucratic by the 1890s and a rising number of male jobs were sedentary the dominant culture of the middle class in the United States began to celebrate bulky, heavily muscled male bodies and body building became popular. Norwood, *Strikebreaking & Intimidation*. 46.

Many packing workers drew on sport or other leisure activities to enhance particular notions of masculinity. Golf and rifle shooting, which were chiefly the pursuits of male supervisors and managers, helped convey a middle-class masculinity. Bill P., an unskilled worker who was unmarried and achieved financial security through frugality and careful real estate investment amidst a booming housing market, took up golf at the age of thirty and joined private clubs in the city.[96] He golfed with a handful of men who were supervisors at the Swift plant because few unionized packing workers golfed.[97] This relatively expensive and highly masculinized sport gave Bill connections with others who had the disposable income for making significant investments, as well as the social advantages of male middle-class respectability. Former Swift office worker Vince Westacott had fond memories of shooting troublesome pigeons in the plant in the late 1940s and early '50s when he was a young office worker. The company provided the ammunition and he and several management people, including the assistant superintendent, Tommy Dane, would "go out shooting pigeons on Saturdays" to control the pigeon population, which was "messy around the plant." The fact that this enjoyable activity was preserved for men who ranked highly in the plant hierarchy suggests that it held significant status, perhaps because it was fairly expensive to own and operate guns purely for sport. Although he was not a hunter, Westacott enjoyed shooting, which he learned as a rifleman during the Second World War, and belonged to a rifle club in Edmonton throughout his life.[98]

In comparison, a number of Edmonton packing men used hunting and fishing to bond with other union men while at the same time supplementing their family grocery bill. The

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[96] For more detail see Chapter Three.
[97] Bill P., Interview.
[98] Vince Westacott, Interview Transcript (Edmonton: Alberta Labour History Institute/Ground Zero, 1998).

exploits of a group of male workers at the Canada Packers plant were written up in the national union newsletter more than once and Edmonton union locals often published the names of winners in union-sponsored fishing derbies. Alex Goruk, one of the most active and militant packing union leaders in Edmonton, and an avid hunter and fisher, wrote in 1953 about an "all union" hunting "expedition" with five other union members – not all UPWA members. His article celebrated the camaraderie found when "six men sitting around a camp-fire pouring coffee" made camp in "muskeg country." "Dropping" a bull elk with several bullets to net "a lovely set of horns and about 500 pounds of meat dressed" provided such a satisfying end to the hunt that "expedition Elk" was immediately planned for the next year.[99] In an interview Alex's wife Ella said the meat Alex brought home from his annual hunting expeditions helped reduce food costs for the family of four. Ella canned much of the meat. The couple clearly valued the functional aspect of hunting to augment earned wages, likely because their Depression experience had engendered a fundamental sense of economic insecurity, even in an era of relative financial stability. The hunting expedition also appears to have been a particularly inclusive activity because the group of union men of predominantly East European heritage welcomed Paul Desrochiers, a Metis man at Canada Packers who was an excellent hunter. The men hunted together for more than twenty-five years.[100]

Drinking was another important source of class and gender cohesion among male workers. Many workers went to one of three taverns in the packing district to "have a few beers" after work as part of a national trend in the postwar years enhanced by a higher

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[99] Alex Goruk, "All Union Expedition," *Canadian Packinghouse Worker*, January 1953.
[100] Goruk, Interview.

disposable income and shorter working hours. Although women were able to participate more fully in the culture of the tavern after separate sections for men and women were eliminated in the 1950s, it was still a profoundly gendered space dominated by men.[101] Some men confided that they drank heavily at times early in their packing career but learned to temper their drinking. Others were unable to make this transition. In 1972 a highly skilled beef kill worker was demoted to a position on the Hog Kill at a much lower job rate after being suspended to "clear up his drinking problem." When the union grieved the man's new position, arguing that he should be returned to his original job at the higher rate. The company's response -- "it would be a disadvantage to the employee, as his old drinking buddies were there" – indicates that there was a pervasive drinking culture among workers on at least one part of the beef kill at Canada Packers in the 1970s.[102] According to union minutes, in 1971 five men were disciplined at Swift for coming to work intoxicated or leaving work early and being discovered at the local tavern.[103]

In the early 1970s, a handful of young men in the Swift plant capitalized on the social ferment over the new male fashion of wearing long hair to reinforce male bonding and class resistance. David Mercer was involved in a battle with the company over the length of male workers' hair during his brief tenure as a packing worker at Edmonton's Swift packinghouse in the late 1960s and early 70s. Mercer was one of two male Swift workers who filed a grievance between August 1971 and January 1972 after being suspended for not complying properly with a foreman's order to get a haircut. In the first incident Len Hildebrandt was

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[101] Craig Heron, *Booze : A Distilled History* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2003). 314, 289-292.
[102] Harvey Shaw, " " (LAC, CFAW fonds, MG 28 I-186, accession 1984-0536, Box 9, Canada Packers 1972).
[103] Swift Local 280, "Swift GMM Minutes."6 April 1971; 1 June 1971; October 1971.

one of a number of male workers who refused to cut his hair when ordered to by a foreman, but he was the only worker suspended for a week without pay.[104] In January 1972, before this issue was settled, Mercer filed a similar grievance after being suspended for one day without pay for taking an entire day to get a haircut that his foreman demanded. Ten other men in the Pork Processing department who were under the same orders returned early in the day with their hair cut. The union won both grievances, the first of which went to arbitration. The men were reimbursed for their lost pay and were granted what the men had demanded all along, which was equal treatment with women.[105] Male workers were allowed to wear hairnets if they chose to keep their hair long, although the company refused to pay for men's hair nets, even though they paid for the hair nets worn by women.[106]

The conflict over hair cuts between male packing workers and management at Edmonton's Swift plant resulted from a convergence of gender and class tensions in 1971 that strengthened male solidarity against the boss, but engendered resentment among some male workers toward packing women who were reaping benefits like equal pay from the emerging women's rights movement. Women's achievements occurred within a larger context of escalating class tensions as industry restructuring intensified competition among companies, putting pressure on management to increase productivity by exerting more control over workers. Gerry Beauchamp, who was president of the Swift local at the time, recalled more than thirty-five years later that rank and file male workers' main concern about management's directives to get a hair cut was the fact that men did not have the same rights

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[104] *Ibid.* 7 September 1971, 5 October 1971. Peter Uganecz, (Edmonton: LAC, CFAW fonds, MG 28 I-186, accession 1984-0536, Box 44, Grievances Local 280, 1972). 21 January.
[105] Swift Local 280, (Edmonton: Library and Archives Canada, Canadian Food and Allied Workers fonds, MG 28 I-186, accession 1984-0536, Box 44, Grievances, Local 280, 1972). 6 January.
[106] ———, "Swift GMM Minutes." 1 February 1972.

as women: "...when it started in the plant, thing is some of the guys said 'I'm not gonna get a hair cut, what the hell – the woman can have her long hair, we'll wear the hair net.' That's the first thing that they said. So with that kind of a attitude we said fine, you want to have long hair, you wear the hair net like the women do."[107]

But union records also document Mercer's sense that he was being targeted for a haircut because of his union activism. Union officials took notorized photographs of Mercer before and after his hair was cut "merely to prove that Swifts' foremen are not consistent even with their own acceptable hair styles – but are just picking on certain employees and Dave is one of them."[108] The contrast between Beauchamp's emphasis on equal rights with women as the men's overriding concern in oral testimony given thirty-five years after the incident, and evidence of class resistance in contemporary textual documents suggests that male workers felt a profound sense of injustice that was rooted in both their class and their gender identities. Long hair was part of a widespread antiestablishment rebellion against dominant male middle-class values. But young packing men – who were the ones wearing their hair long – also felt the most threatened by newly established equal pay for women in the master contracts. The demand for equal treatment with women reflected a fierce resistance to being subordinate to women in any way. The incident reveals one way in which male workers manipulated gender norms strategically, in this case to resist the rising levels of both class and gender oppression they felt.

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[107] Gerry Beauchamp, Telephone Interview (Edmonton: 2007).
[108] Swift Local 280, "Swift GMM Minutes." 2 November 1971.

The battle over long hair in Edmonton's Swift plant in the early 1970s was unique within the industry, according to Beauchamp.[109] Before the grievance was settled the local's chief steward discovered during a union conference in Vancouver that male workers in other Swift plants across Canada were already wearing hairnets to accommodate their long hair.[110] Local Swift management's autocratic and punitive actions, together with the highly gendered arguments marshaled by male workers, suggest that class and gender tensions were felt more deeply in this Edmonton packinghouse. The company's decision to reaffirm gender difference by refusing to pay for male workers' hairnets likely aggravated those tensions and reinforced the bond of working-class masculinity. The fact that in the 1960s and 70s some retired male workers would come to the Canada Packers plant at 6 a.m. to chat with their former workmates, and even today a number of men who are former workers continue to meet for coffee, attests to the strength of this bond.[111] Finally, the dispute over long hair also reveals that male workers were plugged into the political currents of the day, which allowed them to draw on the civil rights movement of the 1960s and early 70s to successfully resist company intimidation and their perception of gender oppression from the new women's movement.[112]

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[109] Union leaders at Canada Packers in Edmonton dismissed a question from the floor about workers being forced to get their hair cut or wear a hairnet during a regular meeting in 1971. Local president Harry Kostiuk told members "the company was within their rights in enforcing such a rule." Canada Packers Local 243, "GMM Minutes 1966-1973." 8 November 1971.

[110] Swift Local 280, "Swift GMM Minutes."2 November 1971. Pamela Sugiman found the reverse situation in a St. Catherine's auto plant where, after female activism successfully eliminated the word "female" from contracts, a woman worker refused to wear a bandana unless male workers were also forced to wear it. The company finally backed down and the women were no longer required to wear a bandana. Sugiman, *Labour's Dilemma.* 180-181

[111] Bozak, Interview.

[112] In 1967 local newspaper coverage implicitly lauded an Edmonton judge for embarrassing two young men wearing long hair in a city courtroom. "Long Hairs Take 'Trip' - Right out of Courtroom," *Edmonton Journal*, 5 October. At the time of this packing grievance a U.S. court was dealing with a case challenging the right of high school officials to determine the length of male students' hair. The case appears to have

Conclusion

This chapter has elaborated a dominant notion of packing manhood and the processes through which it was enacted in response to the labour process, alternative notions of masculinity, the presence of women, and influences in the larger culture. Packing men felt pride and dignity because of their ability as "a special breed" to perform work day in and day out within a harsh shop floor environment. During the era of national bargaining they felt a renewed sense of respectability and entitlement through their membership in a strong union that emphasized their role as producers and helped them exact remarkable wage gains and benefits from management. This understanding of packing manhood fostered powerful bonds of solidarity among male workers that endured even in retirement.

The battles with management over long hair, physical fights, pranks, and the use of "packinghouse language" suggest packing men responded in a variety of ways to assert male working-class dignity and self-respect in the face of an autocratic and demanding management that often infantilized labour in its efforts to impose new equipment, less skilled positions, and speed-ups on workers as part of industry restructuring. But the notion of packing masculinity that dominated also fractured worker solidarity in myriad ways that weakened the position of labour. Rough behaviours could be used to intimidate and oppose workers perceived to threaten a man's power and prestige. In Edmonton packinghouses these behaviours often operated to reinforce a white, heterosexual male, working-class solidarity that offered strong militant resistance on the picket line, but, by reinforcing gender and ethnic divisions, ultimately compromised labour's strength. As we will see in Chapter Six, this

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been well publicized. The American case was resolved in favour of the student, but not until after the Swift grievance was settled. Gael Graham, "Flaunting the Freak Flag: Karr V. Schmidt and the Great Hair Debate in American High Schools, 1965-1975," *Journal of American History* 91, no. 2 (2004).

rough masculine culture was a major structural force women workers had to negotiate in their unique struggle to secure workplace claims during the era of national bargaining.

Chapter Six: "Standing up for ourselves" -- The Culture, Identities, and Resistance of Packing Women

Eighteen-year-old Gloria Kereliuk vowed that she would never marry after she became a packing worker at Edmonton's Swift plant in 1951 and got involved in the local packing union. In an interview a half century later, Kereliuk explained, "I was into politics and I was going to be a politician...I always knew if I wanted to be a politician marriage was definitely out of the question because if I was going to be a good politician I was going to commit to it."[1] At the time most Edmonton packing women who married also lost their job, even though officially their international union upheld the principle of equal seniority for women regardless of marriage. Kereliuk said there were no married women at the Swift plant when she first started. During these early postwar years Kereliuk, a farm girl new to the city, built a life for herself as a packing worker on the assumption that she would remain single and self-supporting. She threw herself into union work, attracted by workshops that expanded her understanding of politics and economics, and the promise of contract gains that enhanced her financial independence.

It was within this context that Gloria Kereliuk spearheaded organization of a Women's Activities Committee (WAC) in 1958 led by women packing workers from all four local packinghouses. Kereliuk was inspired by the first UPWA union school organized by Edmonton workers that spring. She recalled the sense of need that drew a number of packing women to form an organization: "that's when we kind of organized the women and we

[1] Kereliuk, Telephone Interview I.

started kind of saying, 'Hey,' you know, 'it's time that we start standing up for ourselves.'"[2] The women were encouraged by a session on "Women in Industry" led by Mary Eady, a UPWA staff woman who was flown in from the union's Toronto office. Eady addressed the topics of "equal pay, job seniority, [and] the attitude of men members towards women in the union."[3] In her 1958 report on the WAC's formation Kereliuk emphasized that the goal of the committee was to educate union women and the wives of union men so that they could take a more active role in the union: "We wish to participate in union affairs, being stewards and officers, delegates to Labor Council, act on political action committees and take an active part in our federal and provincial elections."[4]

But the promise of the WAC as a vehicle for helping packing women take leadership positions in the union and become political activists, particularly on topics of importance to women workers, was never realized. Shortly after it was officially chartered as Women's Auxiliary Number 7 in 1959, the wives of union men (most of whom were not packing workers) replaced women workers in most executive positions. By the mid-1960s the organization had disappeared completely. Instead, despite centralized bargaining, Edmonton packing women fought discriminatory policies and improved their terms of work through a series of isolated formal and informal struggles that did not coalesce into the kind of "feminist" campaigns mounted by some North American trade union women.[5] Why did the

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[2] *Ibid.*

[3] "Fifty-Two Students Attend First UPWA School in Edmonton," *Canadian Packinghouse Worker*, May., 1958.

[4] Gloria Blonsky, "Around Local 280," *Local 243 News* June 1958. Gloria Kereliuk's maiden name was Blonsky.

[5] I use "feminist" acknowledging that trade union women from this period did not identify with the term. I am referring to the successful campaigns led by African-American packing women in the U.S. to win equal pay in contracts with major meatpacking companies in 1957 and of Canadian auto women whose activism

WAC blossom among Edmonton packing women in the late 1950s, then quickly wither and disappear?

This chapter explores the texture of women's lives in Edmonton packinghouses to trace continuity and change during the era of national pattern bargaining. It expands our understanding of their subjectivity, the issues that most concerned them, the strategies women used to strengthen their claim to wage labour, and the pattern of female activism. Did packing women mobilize a particular notion of femininity to negotiate the challenges they faced? What fostered or limited gender and class consciousness, solidarity and activism? How did women leaders shape women's activism in Edmonton packinghouses? The chapter is divided into two time periods by the formation of the WAC in 1958, which coincided with a major shift in the demographics of Edmonton's female packing labour force and industry restructuring. Interviews with eighteen women who worked in Edmonton packinghouses were central to the research and provided invaluable insight into the subjectivities and identities of packing women, as well as their activism.[6]

My research contributes to a growing international scholarship that examines the lives of unionized women workers during the postwar era who have often been overlooked in conventional labour histories, to better understand their role in industrial unions.[7] It is

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amended the Ontario Human Rights Code, forcing elimination of all sex-based language from union contracts in 1970. Deslippe, *Rights Not Roses*. 79. Sugiman, *Labour's Dilemma*. 167.

[6] Some female grievances revealed during interviews were not documented in the union records. This observation, together with the asymmetrical nature of available union records, suggests that the research yields a very limited picture of packing women's activism. Also, the interview sample includes a disproportionate number of long-service women workers, Canadian-born women from a Ukrainian background, and women workers who were married to packing men.

[7] In the immediate postwar years women comprised fifteen per cent of workers in the Canadian manufacturing sector where industrial unions were most powerful. That proportion had dropped to ten per cent by 1981. White, *Sisters and Solidarity*. 49. Deslippe, *Rights Not Roses*. Nancy Felice Gabin,

influenced by the work of feminist labour historians who have explored the subjectivities and workplace strategies of working-class women employed in a capitalist and patriarchal economy to emphasize the importance of considering human agency and subjectivity as well as structural context.[8] Packing women have been a subject of study in the United States, Argentina, Australia, New Zealand, and in Canada at the national level, but this research is the first local study of women who worked in Canadian packinghouses.[9] My interpretation builds on studies that explore women's workplace culture as a site of both resistance and accommodation, and a place where rituals, strategies, and relationships can reveal new understandings of gendered working-class identities.[10] Showcasing the lives of women workers also disrupts the male-dominated historical narrative of the Canadian West, particularly in Alberta where a dramatic economic boom following World War Two produced a society distinctive in Canada for its exceptional job opportunities and social conservatism.[11]

Part I: Packing Women 1947-1959

The Labour Process

The Women's Activities Committee formed in 1958 at a critical juncture in Edmonton packinghouses -- just before the introduction of new technologies, and elimination

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Feminism in the Labor Movement : Women and the United Auto Workers, 1935-1975 (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990).

[8] Joan Sangster, *Transforming Labour : Women and Work in Post-War Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010). 12. See also Kessler-Harris, *Gendering Labor History*; Bradbury, " Women's History and Working-Class History; Baron, "Gender and Labor History."

[9] Fehn, "Striking Women"; Fink, *Cutting into the Meatpacking Line*; Jerrard, "A Surprising Struggle?; Leckie, "Women in Industrial Action; Lobato, "Women Workers in the "Cathedrals of Corned Beef"; Fink, "What Kind of Woman." Joan Sangster, *Transforming Labour*, Chapter Five.

[10] Parr, *Gender of Breadwinners*; Sangster, *Earning Respect*; Sugiman, *Labour's Dilemma*; Guard, "The 'Woman Question'"; Klausen, "The Plywood Girls."

[11] Jameson and McManus, *One Step over the Line*. See Introduction. Loch-Drake, "Jailed Heroes and Kitchen Heroines; Cole, "Garment Manufacturing in Edmonton."

of the marriage bar for women, profoundly changed the demographics of the labour force. These changes disrupted the social cohesion that had developed among a core group of packing women during the 1950s. Between 1947 and 1959 the absolute number of women rose from roughly 350 to a peak of 452 in 1959, and remained a stable twenty per cent of Edmonton's packing workforce, despite significant postwar layoffs.[12] The gender division of labour dictated that women performed the same kinds of jobs in all of Edmonton's four packinghouses, but there were some significant differences among the plants. Based on 1947 strike records, Swift employed the largest number of women production workers, 128 compared to 107 at Canada Packers. Interviews suggest that because the female processing lines were substantial in these plants, each was housed in a separate room -- for example, the wiener room and the bacon room -- which often created tight-knit groups. In comparison, Burns employed only fifty women out of a workforce that was not that much smaller than Canada Packers, because it did not operate as many processes as the two larger plants -- for example it did not have a canning department, which usually employed women.[13] This may explain why at Burns the bacon, wiener and other processing lines were all in the same room,

[12] The proportion of women in Edmonton packinghouses was slightly higher than the Canadian average but typical of many packinghouses across the continent. Alberta's meatpacking industry experienced severe layoffs between 1946 and 1951 -- ten per cent *versus* the national rate of five per cent. Edmonton's meatpacking labour force appears to have expanded more than the provincial or national average between 1947 and 1959 -- thirty-five per cent *versus* eighteen and twenty-three per cent respectively. There is no equivalent data for Edmonton in 1948, so I used 1947 strike records. Horowitz, *Negro and White*; Labour Canada, Strikes and Lockouts Files (Canada Packers, Swift, Burns, Gainers, Edmonton); Statistics Canada, *The Slaughtering and Meat Packing Industry and the Sausage and Casings Industry*, 1949-79; ———, *General Review of the Manufacturing Industries of Canada*, V. 2, Supplementary Data and Analysis, 1940-48. The number of packing women in Edmonton never exceeded that number before the last packinghouse closed down in 1998.

[13] Hampson, "Alberta Staff Reports, Locals 233-422." Local 233, 29 March 1948.

which seems to have fostered cohesion among a broader number of women across that plant, most of whom worked within sight of each other.[14]

Working closely together helped spark activism about work issues, particularly when women worked with a knife, which encouraged a sense of entitlement. Gloria Kereliuk, who enjoyed working in the forty-five-woman Pork Trim Department at Swift throughout the 1950s, said in an interview, "My department was really a woman's world."[15] Women in the Pork Trim department who used a knife (which was traditionally understood to be a male prerogative) to remove bits of meat from the larger cuts performed by men in the Pork Cuts department saw themselves as skilled workers.[16] Kereliuk, who had worked in the department since 1951, said women felt, "we had to wear a wire mesh glove so it was a man's job, and we were very skilled."[17] The direct comparison made possible by similarities between their job process and men's intensified the women's sense of injustice at receiving lower rates of pay for the work of trimming meat. Gloria, who was the most vocal advocate of equal pay in any Edmonton plant, explained in a 2006 interview, "Women are extremely good at that job. Their hands are more nimble. Men don't do the small stuff as well."[18]

Separate incidents in the two largest packinghouses demonstrate the cohesiveness and militancy that seemed pronounced among women in the Pork Trim Department. In an interview more than thirty years later, UPWA staff representative Jack Hampson recalled the militancy of women in the Trimming Department at Canada Packers during the war.

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[14] Vicky T., Interview.
[15] Gloria Kereliuk, Telephone Interview II (2006).
[16] The only other female task that involved using a knife was the job of manually skinning wieners, but this involved using a small knife, which did not convey the same status as the work performed by men using a larger knife in the Pork Trim Department.
[17] Kereliuk, Telephone Interview II.
[18] *Ibid.*

Hampson said the women held a sit-down strike in the Ladies Dressing Room because the company refused to comply with the federal government's Cameron Report, which had ordered Canada Packers to post its wage schedule.[19] The women's refusal to work jeopardized war production, which drew first the provincial Deputy Minister of Labour and then Alberta Premier William Aberhart into the dispute before the company finally posted the rates.[20] In a separate incident more than ten years later, Swift management fired two women workers in the Pork Trim Department because "they could not make knife girls out of them." The women grieved this decision claiming the company could not tell in three days if they could master the knife job, and won.[21]

Notwithstanding the distinctiveness of pork trim jobs, the packing industry's gendered wage structure limited work-based differences among women workers significantly compared to men, reducing this potential source of tension and division. The notion of skill was so completely gendered in the packing industry that women who worked with knives skinning wieners or trimming meat from animal parts that had been severed by men's knives were still considered "unskilled." As a result "women's" jobs were congregated at the three lowest wage levels, compared to men, who occupied all of the industry's system of twenty-one wage levels or "brackets."[22] This meant there were few occupational distinctions among packing women compared to packing men.[23]

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[19] Hampson, Interview Transcript.
[20] *Ibid.*
[21] H. Crockett, (LAC, CFAW fonds, MG 28 I-186, PWOC and UPWA series, Vol 14, Swift Grievances 1956-57, 1955). 9 March.
[22] Canada Packers Local 243, (LAC, CFAW fonds, MG 28 I-186, PWOC and UPWA series, Vol 58 Wage Schedules Canada Packers 1957-59).
[23] Jennifer A. Stephen's analysis of government training and unemployment programmes during and after World War Two provides valuable insight into the development of gendered employment. Stephen, *Pick One Intelligent Girl.*

Demographics

A number of demographic factors also helped foster workplace cohesion among packing women in the early postwar period. Interviews reveal that many women entering local packing houses in the 1940s and 50s came from a similar background. The vast majority of Edmonton packing women were young, single migrants from Prairie farms who had a limited education.[24] Most women left school between Grade 8 and Grade 10 because they grew up during Depression and war years when farm families struggled to put food on the table and the province could not afford to bus rural children to school. A small number of packing women had only a few years of elementary schooling. Their farming background meant they were familiar with the odours, sights, and sounds of animals and shared common values, such as respect for the heavy manual labour performed in the packinghouse. Ellen B., who started at the Burns plant in 1952, said she and most of her women co-workers "felt comfortable" at the packinghouse because "when you come from a farm you're used to just about everything – eviscerate, pluck chicken – nothing shocked us."[25] Vicky Beauchamp, who was the third oldest of nine children, felt that she developed a strong work ethic on the family farm, which prepared her well for a job at Canada Packers where she started in the late 1950s: "You had to work hard, it was physical work...When you go to work anywhere my father and mother's philosophy was 'don't let grass grow under your feet.' You gotta hustle, you gotta move."[26]

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[24] Thirteen of the seventeen women workers interviewed or profiled posthumously were raised on a farm. In the 1946 census women dominated the age categories of twenty to twenty-four and twenty-five to thirty-four compared to men, who dominated the age categories of twenty-five to thirty-four and thirty-five to forty-four. Canada. Dominion Bureau of Statistics, *Census of the Prairie Provinces, 1946 = Recensement Des Provinces Des Prairies, 1946.* Vol. II Occupations and Industries, Table 4.

[25] Ellen B., Interview.

[26] Beauchamp, Interview.

The female labour force was also more ethnically homogeneous than the male packing labour force, with the vast majority of women Canadian-born and seen as white. According to 1946 provincial census data eighty-three per cent of women in the largest female job category were born in Canada, compared to only half the men. Sixty-five per cent of Alberta packing women identified as English, the most privileged ethnic identity in Canadian society, compared to fifty-five per cent of men. Although the number of workers claiming Ukrainian heritage was fairly similar for men and women, the proportion of women identifying as German or Polish was half the number for men.[27]

Interviews suggest that the female labour force remained predominantly white, although it became more ethnically diverse in the 1950s as Edmonton packinghouses absorbed new postwar European immigrants, such as Hungarians following their 1956 political uprising. Former workers remembered a handful of black men who worked in the packinghouses, but the only black women they could recall worked in lower paid poultry jobs, not with red meat. Several women said they had worked with Metis women, but none recalled working with Aboriginal women. Of the eighteen former women workers interviewed for this study, a disproportionate number – eleven – were second or even third-

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[27] Ukrainian workers represented roughly 18% per cent of women and 15% of men. Other Europeans, predominantly Germans and Poles, represented 11% of women but 21% of the men in this occupation. Census data in these years display two occupational categories related to the meatpacking industry: One is "Butchers and Meatcutters," the other is "Canners, Curers, and Packers." The first category is of little use here because women comprised less than five per cent of those workers and the category includes an unclear but substantial proportion of retail butchers. But women comprised roughly half the workers in the second category, Canners, Curers, and Packers, and the category includes only workers in manufacturing enterprises. Alberta figures for 1946 -- the only year available for the province -- reveal that the proportion of Canadian-born packing women in the larger occupational category was 83%, compared to 50% for men. Among Alberta packing women 65% self-identified as English, compared to 55% of men. In comparison, in 1951 -- the only year when comparable figures are available for Canadian packing workers as a whole -- 79% of packing women were Canadian-born and only 36% identified as English. Canada. Dominion Bureau of Statistics, *Census of the Prairie Provinces, 1946 = Recensement Des Provinces Des Prairies, 1946.* Table 9. ———, *Classification of Occupations, Ninth Census of Canada*, 1951, Tables 12 and 20.

generation Ukrainian-Canadian, but I was unable to locate any women seen as non-white. Yet the ability of women interviewed to readily recall workers by their race or ethnicity reveals a labour force stratified along racial and ethnic lines that likely encouraged the production of whiteness by "othering" non-white women. This impression is reinforced by an incident former Burns worker Ellen B. related in a 2006 interview. Ellen said she was ostracized by women co-workers because she sat with a woman of African-Canadian heritage at a local bar during the 1950s. The two had arrived early and Ellen was warned by her friend: "'Well if we go we're going to be sitting by ourselves,' and I says, 'Are you crazy? My friends are there.' She says, 'OK, wait and see what happens.' We got there, and sure enough, they walked right by us."[28] The effort by Anglo-Canadian Albertans to preserve their privileged status in the postwar years, together with the rising social status of those from a Slavic or other East European background, likely encouraged many packing women to distance themselves from women considered non-white. Even with relative racial homogeneity, ethnic tensions sometimes erupted when Canadian-born women felt resentment toward groups of immigrant women who spoke among themselves in a different language.

The proximity of the three biggest plants meant that women usually lived in the packinghouse district so that they were a short walk or transit ride from work, because most could not afford to operate a car in the 1950s. They were often neighbours as well as co-workers, which made it easier to get together outside of work. The fact that women were unable to marry until the late 1950s without risking job loss, strengthened bonds among some young single women workers who roomed together or socialized outside of work. In an interview Gloria Kereliuk explained that at the Swift plant in the 1950s a number of the

[28] Ellen B., Interview.

women she worked with went out dancing together: "I love to dance. I would sooner dance than eat. And we didn't have pubs and all that kind of stuff in my day, and you weren't allowed to even have liquor in the dance halls and stuff, so we used to go dancing about five nights a week, a whole bunch of us...it was a different dance hall [each time]." Kereliuk emphasized that the women lived near each other and stuck together, travelling to and from the dance halls by bus:

> ...well some women dated, but most of the people I hung out with didn't...And if we'd meet someone that we particularly liked and he'd asked us for a date, we'd say, 'Well, I'll be dancing at such and such a place on this date.' And if they really liked you then they would come to that one ... and that was how we kept company.[29]

Gloria Kereliuk's elaboration of how single women in Edmonton's Swift packing plant "kept company" with men during the years when the marriage bar was in place reveals that a common strategy among some women workers to protect their job also enhanced their female relationships in the 1950s. There were also opportunities for women workers to get together outside of work for social activities like bowling, softball, annual summer picnics and Christmas parties sponsored by the companies or union locals. **[Figure 12]**

A number of structural factors helped build considerable social cohesion among women workers in Edmonton packing houses during the immediate postwar years. Since the vast majority of women had come off a family farm in the region, they often had similar levels of education and similar childhood experiences, and values. Perhaps most

[29] Kereliuk, Telephone Interview I.

importantly, as young single women most could find the time to socialize with coworkers outside of work and perhaps even get involved in the union.

Women's Culture and Identities: "Women are just faster"

Feminist historians have demonstrated that to understand the pattern of women's accommodation and resistance in the workplace, we need to explore their subjectivity as wage earners as well as the influence of the cultural milieu in which they lived. As Joan Sangster has explained:

> The cultural values and social customs that women brought to work with them ... became important resources shaping their coping strategies at work and their understanding of the gendered division of labour, in the same way that their daily experience of the gendered division of labour contributed to their understanding of a 'just' wage for women and their feminine identity."[30]

Many women who came of age in the 1940s and 50s developed a more limited sense of entitlement to workplace claims in reaction to what American feminist historian Alice Kessler-Harris has called the "gendered imagination" of those in positions of power who shaped socioeconomic policy in the postwar decades. In the postwar decades it was assumed that women would engage in wage work only briefly before marrying, then settle down to a life of domesticity, economically dependent on a husband. As Kessler-Harris has demonstrated, "gender constituted a crucial measure of fairness and served a powerful mediating role" in a historical moment when federal governments took on the re-allocation of resources in the shift to a social welfare state. This gendered imagination, which was committed to the ideal of the "male-breadwinner family," produced a more limited concept of

[30] Sangster, *Earning Respect*. 83-4

"economic citizenship" for women than for men.[31] In Canada it resulted in a concerted postwar effort by governments to discourage married women from taking paid work and to confine those engaged in wage labour to a narrow range of low-paid jobs.[32] Government daycares were closed, married women were barred from the civil service, the income tax system was changed to tax more heavily the wages earned by married women, and the unemployment insurance system contained new regulations designed to limit women's access to benefits.[33] The assumption of female domesticity underlying these policies weakened the job claims of all women workers, including those who were single.

Alberta's postwar economic transformation intensified this dominant discourse of gender conservatism. Resistance to women's rights, which characterized Alberta government and society during the province's early twentieth century land boom, became entrenched under the leadership of Social Credit leader Ernest Manning, an evangelical Christian who consigned women to a limited and subordinate role in politics and society.[34] The Manning government's "preoccupation" with dramatic oil and gas industry expansion "combined with an inherent distaste on the part of the government for codification of human rights" weakened the impact in the province of a postwar international discourse about human rights. During these years very few women were elected to provincial office and women workers in Alberta

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[31] Alice Kessler-Harris, *In Pursuit of Equity: Women, Men, and the Quest for Economic Citizenship in 20th-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001). 5-6, 10

[32] Stephen, *Pick One Intelligent Girl.*

[33] Ann Porter, "Women and Income Security in the Postwar Period: The Case of Unemployment Insurance, 1945-1962," *Labour/Le Travail* 31, no. Spring (1993).

[34] Cavanaugh, "The Limitations of the Pioneering Partnership; Alvin Finkel, "Populism and Gender: The U.F.A. And Social Credit Experiences," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 27, no. No. 4 (1992-93).

had less legislative leverage than most other provinces by which to challenge employers who used discriminatory hiring and wage practices in the 1940s and 50s.[35]

Within this challenging social and political context Edmonton packing women fashioned themselves in a diversity of ways to bolster their workplace claims. Kathleen Canning has argued convincingly that historical change occurs when individuals respond to a historical moment by drawing on the discourses that surround them to "reframe" or "reconstrue" those narratives to suit their own ends.[36] In Edmonton packinghouses many women workers developed a view of themselves as highly industrious and competent workers who could outperform men in particular kinds of work. Women's attitudes were distinctive compared to male workers who, in interviews, were more inclined to talk about their ability to restrict the intensity of their work or evade work. Congregated in "female" departments, like bacon-slicing, or the wiener line, many women workers displayed a sense of pride in their ability to perform the deft hand work required, for example, to shingle bacon onto a piece of cardboard, manually skin wieners with small knives, or twist sausage links. Women in all four packinghouses displayed a similar confidence in their ability to outperform men in these jobs. In an interview, former Burns worker Dolly L. was adamant about the inability of male workers to perform competently on the wiener or bacon lines: "you had to wear plastic gloves and they were just too clumsy for that job....Men just aren't that fast you know...I've never seen a man do that. Never."[37] **[Figure 7]** The persistent power of these gender norms was clear in a group interview with retired packing men and

[35] Shirley Tillotson argues that Ontario's legislation was not very effective, but it indicates a more progressive political climate for women workers in Ontario compared to most of the country, particularly Alberta. Shirley Tillotson, "Human Rights Law as Prism: Women's Organization, Unions, and Ontario's Female Employees Fair Remuneration Act, 1951," *Canadian Historical Review* 72, no. December (1991).
[36] Canning, "Feminist History after the Linguistic Turn."
[37] Dolly L., Interview.

women in Edmonton who chuckled at the "silly" idea that male workers could "iron" wiener packages to seal them – a job management assigned exclusively to women in the early postwar years before that process was mechanized in the 1960s.[38]

This view of packing femininity was probably reinforced in the immediate postwar years by events like a 1945 National War Labour Board (NWLB) decision on equal pay at Edmonton's Burns plant.[39] When the NWLB overturned a lower board's determination that women should be paid eighty per cent of the male wage, and instead said women "may be paid in proportion to their efficiency," it made equal pay for women conditional on their ability to perform as well as men.[40] The decision likely fueled women's sense that as a group they were in competition with male workers. This impression is reinforced by Gloria Kereliuk's response to an interview question about the value of union seminars to women. Kereliuk emphasized the commitment of women workers to both their job and union work because of their unique need: "The women were very dedicated and we had something to prove, which the men really didn't. They always got higher wages for doing the same thing so they didn't have to fight for it. But we did."[41]

Gendered pride in the quality of their work is also evident in the tension it sometimes sparked among women workers. In 1954 UPWA's Alberta staff representative Jack Hampson reported that at the Swift plant, "We have a girl who is employed in the sausage kitchen who has such an unholy lack of interest in her own sanitary condition that the Government inspector and the girls in the plant insist that the Company fire her." For

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[38] Focus Group, 20 May. 2004, UFCW Local 1118, Edmonton.
[39] For more detail see Chapter Four.
[40] "NWLB Ruling Favors Women: Same Rates as Men Are Granted," *The Montreal Daily Star*, 9 July. 1945.
[41] Kereliuk, Telephone Interview II.

reasons that are not explained both management and the union felt that the woman should be retained, but Hampson felt certain that the women's demand would prevail: "Knowing the girls in this plant, I am sure that the difficulty will only be resolved by the girl being dismissed."[42] The outcome of this incident is unknown, but Hampson's interpretation suggests that these women workers enforced standards of industry and efficiency that exceeded those of management and the union, and were uncompromising toward any woman who violated those standards. In some settings the attempt to prove themselves created intergenerational conflict among women workers. Those who were younger or newer often felt they had more to prove than seasoned women workers, yet at other times it was experienced women who vaunted their prowess in a job. Gerry Beauchamp, who started at the Swift plant in 1952 and later became president of the union local, recalled in a 2004 interview that conflict among women workers over the pace of work was a recurring problem. "I used to tell the women in there, 'You guys are crazy... you're going too fast in there.' But then one plays against the other one..." Beauchamp said younger women were often the ones who worked faster than older, more experienced women workers: "I used to tell the younger workers, 'You know what? You're going be old some day. Then you're going to understand what they're talking about. You're gonna get carpal tunnel or some other problems.' After a while they'd smarten up."[43]

The need to preserve an image of women workers as highly industrious and competent helps make sense of the controlling behavior that experienced women workers often displayed toward new women on the job. Some of the women who started at the plants

[42] Hampson, "Alberta Staff Reports, Locals 233-511." Local 280, 15 November 1954.
[43] Beauchamp, Interview.

in the 1940s and 50s described their first days on the job as difficult because veteran women were "mean" or "nasty" toward them. Gloria Kereliuk nearly quit her new packing job after several days when she was given "a really rough time" by women in the Pork Trim Department at the Swift plant in 1951. Kereliuk felt she was "not received too well by the other women" because she was "tall, blonde, good-looking, and oh did I get a hard time. I was very outgoing -- as you can tell! -- and I was not received too well by the other women." Kereliuk saw herself as someone who got along well with the handful of male workers in the department, even management, partly because she was quite assertive. One of the male workers encouraged her to stay, just to "show them."[44] "People in the plant valued and respected anyone who could speak up for themselves. [I] earned a lot of respect from management men and most of the guys."[45] Ella Goruk described her first shift in the fresh sausage kitchen on nights as "kind of awful, but you stick it out." Asked about any initiation rites Goruk responded that she found the people in the department "quite rough."[46]

The stigma attached to industrial-scale animal slaughter, which was different for women than for men, likely reinforced the controlling behaviour of more experienced women workers as they tried to minimize sexual harassment (although it was not known by that term in the 1950s) and any damage to women workers' reputations. The image of male workers who became "hardened" by the disturbing work of slaughtering, dismembering, and cutting up hundreds of animals each day was more easily reconciled with dominant notions of "tough" masculinity, than the conventional image of women workers, even though women worked in much cleaner areas of the plant. Cultural assumptions about women's societal role

[44] Kereliuk, Telephone Interview I.
[45] _____, Telephone Interview II.
[46] Goruk, Interview.

as nurturers, which placed a higher premium on women's morality and sexual propriety, stigmatized all packing women. Although women workers said their families did not object to them working in the packinghouse, in the community many felt the sting of judgmental attitudes. Gloria Kereliuk said that in the 1950s the public did not think women should be in the packinghouse: "You tell them you work in the plant and -- '*You work in the plant?!*' You're supposed to be waiting tables or a secretary or, you know, or something like that."[47] Within the packinghouse this image made women workers, particularly those who accepted non-traditional jobs, or who behaved in ways that violated the hetero-normative culture of the shop floor, more vulnerable to damaging gossip and rumours. Describing the impact of packinghouse work on mid-western American women in the 1940s, Debra Fink found that, "Meatpacking was hard and dirty work, and at a basic level moving into that world called their fundamental decency into question."[48] Packinghouse workers' reputation as confrontational unionists, which male workers cultivated as part of their strategy for building a powerful industrial union after World War Two, likely intensified this stigma.

Just working in the packinghouse compromised a woman's respectability, but someone like Ella Goruk, who lived common-law in the 1950s to keep her job, was especially at risk. Yet women workers responded to Goruk's situation with a level of acceptance that indicates an ambivalence toward contemporary notions of female respectability. In interviews women who knew Goruk spoke highly of her and did not mention her common-law status. Yet when asked, they said they were aware that she and Alex Goruk never married, but did not know it was because of the marriage bar in 1949.

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[47] Kereliuk, Telephone Interview I.
[48] Fink, "What Kind of Woman." 254

Goruk said she kept her reasons to herself. Similarly, during her pregnancy in 1952 she wore a loose coat and took a layoff caused by a train strike when she was eight months pregnant. Neither the foreman, nor any of the women she worked with, knew she was pregnant. She returned to work four months later. Goruk's job strategy of not talking about actions that violated contemporary gender strictures for women but allowed her to stay employed, together with the nonjudgmental attitude of female co-workers, reveal the pragmatism with which packing women negotiated notions of female respectability, which were being reinscribed more firmly in the 1950s.

High female wages were a major source of pride that helped compensate for the negative image of packing women in the community. The union's strategy of initially raising the wages of the lowest paid workers the most disproportionately benefited women workers because they were confined to the bottom three wage brackets. Between 1939 and 1959 the female base rate rose from sixty-six per cent to ninety-three per cent of the male base rate in the master contracts of trend-setting Canada Packers.[49] Since most men were paid at wage levels well above the lowest three brackets where women were confined, comparing the average male and female wage reveals less dramatic gains: Women's *average* wage rate as a percentage of the *average* male rate remained stable at about seventy-four per cent from 1947 until 1959.[50] Compared to other women workers in the manufacturing sector, however, packing women earned an exceptional wage throughout the 1940s and especially the 1950s: Their average wage exceeded the average wage for women in the manufacturing sector by as

[49] The base rate is the starting rate workers were paid after they completed a probationary period, which varied between companies and over time from roughly one to six months. Canada Packers Ltd. and UPWA Local 243, "Collective Agreements, 1947-1980."
[50] Canada, *Wage Rates, Salaries, and Hours of Labour, 1947-1983.*

much as thirty-two per cent some years, compared to packing men, whose average wage exceeded the average male manufacturing wage by just six per cent in a good year.[51] **[Table 4]** Anne A. saw her weekly paycheque more than double in 1949 when she left her manufacturing job at the GWG garment factory in Edmonton for a job at the Swift packinghouse.[52] By 1958 when the average hourly manufacturing rate for women nationally was $1.08, packing women were starting at $1.82 an hour. At roughly the same time, a first year registered nurse in Edmonton earned only $1.26 an hour.[53]

In interviews packing women revealed the tremendous satisfaction they derived from their ability to earn such a good wage. Vicky Beauchamp, who started at Canada Packers in 1959, explained, "The meat industry was unionized and they were well paid jobs compared to everywhere else. Girls I went to school with who didn't go on to university went to work in restaurants or banks or government offices didn't get nowhere near the wages I was getting."[54] Gloria Kereliuk was even more direct about the significance of the high wages she earned:

> ... when these little girls I went to school with and they were working in the bank, and secretaries and nice dressy dressy jobs, and I'd come and I'd tell them that I was working in the plant, and they'd 'eeeew' you know, and they figured that they were better than I am and I says, 'Well you show me your bank account and

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[51] Canada. Dominion Bureau of Statistics., *Earnings and Hours of Work in Manufacturing* (Ottawa: Dominion Bureau of Statistics, Labour Division, 1938-69). Cat. 72-204

[52] Anne A., Interview.

[53] Swift Canadian Co. Ltd. and UFCW, Swift Local 280 Collective Agreements 1943-1982. *Canada Year Book.* Leacy, Buckley, and Urquhart, *Historical Statistics of Canada.* Table E60-61 (subsection 68 represents all manufacturing and is not broken down into durable/non-durable). Statistics Canada, *Manufacturing Industries of Canada National and Provincial Areas,* 1972-1980; ———, *The General Review of the Manufacturing Industries of Canada,* V. 1, Industries by Province, 1949-1971." Also, cat. 31-201. "Women's Rights," (EMA).

[54] Beauchamp, Interview.

> I'll show you mine.' I mean I made a helluva lot more money than what they did so don't you snub your nose at me ... I was makin' the money. And I could have pretty much anything I wanted to because I could afford it, where the people that worked in the bank and in the little secretary jobs were making half of what I was making.[55]

These comments by Kereliuk and others suggest that most packing women compared themselves with other women, not with men, when thinking about their wages, which made them feel exceptionally well paid despite the persistence of a gendered differential in the base rate.

Packing women's response to their new status as wage earners revealed a sense of self that diverged from the emphasis on individualism and autonomy typical of male workers who more often spoke of themselves as breadwinners. Packing women tended to view their wage work from a more collectivist perspective that privileged the needs of the family rather than the need for monetary gain and freedom. Anne A.'s determination to get a better job at the Swift plant in 1949 was rooted in her commitment to her family. Anne was considered too short by Swift management and was passed over by management at least three times before finally getting hired. The 18-year-old continued trying because the much higher Swift wage could make a real difference for her recently widowed mother who was supporting Anne's two younger siblings on the family's market garden property near the plant. Anne continued to live at home after she was forced to give up her packing job when she married,

[55] Kereliuk, Telephone Interview I.

labouring on the market garden property to help the family "make do" during these financially difficult years.[56]

Gloria Kereliuk felt her parents did not need her financial support on the family farm, but her passionate investment in union work was consistent with her family's strong commitment to community activism. Kereliuk said her mother was heavily involved as a volunteer in their local farm community, particularly community politics, as were all but one of her six siblings. She also took great pride, however, in her ability to be self-supporting and to save money during the years she was single in the 1950s. As we saw in the introduction to this chapter, Kereliuk saved towards a down payment on a house on the assumption that she would remain single and devote herself to political life.[57] The vital role these young women played in their family economy, or in sustaining their family's community-minded values, helped impel them to demand equal access to steady jobs, better wages, and full benefits. Angie C., who started at Canada Packers in 1954, just before she married, felt her packing income played an important role in her family economy, even though she made less than her husband, a policeman. Angie said she and her husband were able to buy their own home, put their children through high school and -- in the case of the two youngest -- nursing, and take a lot of vacations because of her income. That all changed when the plant shut down in 1984 and she could find only low paid part-time work: "we had to cut back after the job was gone."[58]

Some women workers drew connections between their family background and their response to the packinghouse environment that reveal a sense of pride in their ability to cope.

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[56] Anne A., Interview.
[57] Kereliuk, Telephone Interview I.
[58] Angie C., Telephone Interview (Edmonton: 2006).

Gloria Kereliuk saw herself as unusually assertive among packing women, most of whom she felt had the "mindset ... keep your shoulder to the grindstone, keep your mouth shut, a woman's place is in the kitchen." She attributed her assertiveness to an unusual upbringing for a girl raised on a prairie farm in the 1930s and 40s. Kereliuk was the third of five girls and one brother, who was the youngest, in an immigrant family that was raised almost single-handedly by her Ukrainian mother on a family farm in the Peace River district during the Depression and war years. Kereliuk's Ukrainian father worked seven days a week for the railway in a tiny community on the rail line sixty miles from their family home. She seldom saw him throughout most of her childhood. Her mother ran the farm for many years with the help of her five daughters, visiting her husband once a week and taking home his laundry. Speaking emphatically, Kereliuk said this experience made her and her sisters more confident and outspoken than most women of their era.

> Nobody ever dared tell us our place was in the kitchen. We were not intimidated women ... we had the responsibility of men's work. We had to shuffle and do and so we were outspoken. We learned to cook and clean and sew too, but we had to do everything else ... so in a way I'm not a typical female.[59]

Kereliuk felt that being raised in a female-dominated household made her comfortable working with women, yet more able to handle men both on the shop floor and in her personal life. "That's why I could be so aggressive with men."[60] Kereliuk felt her atypical family experience allowed her to speak up for herself in the packinghouse and made her a dynamic

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[59] Kereliuk, Interview.
[60] ———, Telephone Interview II.

force within the Swift local and the WAC in 1958. This self-image was corroborated in interviews with other workers who emphasized Kereliuk's exceptional assertiveness among Swift packing women – one former manager with thinly veiled resentment.

In comparison, Ella Goruk, who took the position of treasurer on the WAC, saw herself as someone who was held back from union involvement by a difficult upbringing, yet took pride in her ability to maintain a lengthy packing career. Raised on an Alberta farm by German immigrant parents through the Depression, Goruk received only a Grade Four education because as the eldest of seven children she was sent to a neighbouring farm at the age of eleven to perform childcare duties. She never really returned home. "Yes, it was a little rough. There's lots of times I think, gosh, if I had the education where would I be? But I did fairly well for myself." Goruk said lack of education was an important factor in her decision not to become very involved in her union local at the Canada Packers plant, even though she worked there for more than thirty years and her common-law husband was the union president for many of those years. Goruk felt that being forced to grow up so quickly shaped her attitude to work: When on the job she said, "I just wanted to work" and did not "fool around" like some of the other women. "I guess I was just brought up that way... . Maybe being brought up to shift for yourself that way so young." Goruk said her husband's traditional ideas about the role of women discouraged her from channeling energy beyond her work and family responsibilities: "He said 'Don't worry about it.'" Goruk explained that at one point when she considered taking a mathematics course: "Alex was kind of, 'Well

why are you doing that?' He said 'Yeah, next you're going to go play in a band some place.' No he was quite ... protective, or just didn't want me to go do anything else like that."[61]

Significantly, Gloria Kereliuk was the only woman interviewed who boasted about her ability to be physically aggressive. In one incident triggered by her refusal to back down in an argument on the shop floor with a "tough" older German immigrant co-worker who was "always threatening to beat everybody up," Kereliuk said the woman challenged her to a fist-fight outside the plant after work. When Kereliuk appeared after work, ready to fight, the older woman "burst out laughing and said, 'you're crazy,'" and they became friends. Kereliuk saw this incident as the woman's attempt to intimidate her for being so outspoken and took pride in her ability to stand up for herself – something she felt most packing women were unable to do.[62] In interviews a number of women said they "walked away" from shop floor bullies, who appear to have been ubiquitous. Yet women felt they were capable of standing up for themselves when necessary to protect their packing job or their terms of work. Anne A., who worked predominantly with women in the canning room at Swifts, felt she and her female co-workers "held their own" with the handful of men in the department who swore and "ribbed" women about "what you couldn't do or what you could do." Sometimes this meant she would give the men "a dirty look" or, with other women in the department tell them "you better watch out or we'll plug the machine and you'll be in trouble," she said humorously.[63] The speed and effectiveness with which a group of women workers in the Casings Department at the Swift plant attacked the male worker who struck a female coworker in the 1950s incident related by Vince Westacott, also affirms the ability of

[61] Goruk, Interview.
[62] Kereliuk, Telephone Interview II.
[63] Anne A., Interview.

many packing women to adopt the rough culture of the packinghouse when necessary.[64] As Linda Gordon has pointed out, within conventional notions of femininity women are expected "to be good," which means speaking out about injustices, yet at the same time they are often scorned for being outspoken.[65] Notwithstanding Gloria Kereliuk's experience, in the packinghouse this inherent contradiction meant that assertive women risked being accorded little respect and labeled "rough," which may have made women reluctant to acknowledge in interviews the full extent to which they stood up to shop floor intimidation.[66]

It seems that amidst a diversity of packing women a dominant notion of packing femininity operated in Edmonton plants to legitimize women's workplace claims and help them withstand the often rough male-dominated shop floor culture. It encompassed a gendered sense of pride in work performance and an attempt to avoid conflict; feelings rooted in women workers' more vulnerable position in the packinghouse. It was balanced, however, by woman's ability to adopt behaviours that violated contemporary gender norms strategically to defend their dignity as workers, and workplace claims that gave them a vital and meaningful role in their household economy.

Grievances

Grievances, including anything from a group complaint that went to arbitration to informal individual acts of resistance that never entered the formal record, provide a window into the daily life of women performing wage labour in Edmonton packinghouses. Joan Sangster has argued that despite its significant limitations, the new "codified grievance

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[64] This incident is discussed in more depth in Chapter Five.
[65] Linda Gordon, *Heroes of Their Own Lives: The Politics and History of Family Violence: Boston 1880-1960* (New York: Penguin Books, 1989).
[66] Gloria Kereliuk's belief that her assertiveness was exceptional reinforces this interpretation.

system" instituted after World War Two helped packing women "temper" the arbitrariness of the industrial workplace.[67] Paradoxically, despite a national system of pattern bargaining, significant forces of social cohesion, and a common sense of job entitlement among Edmonton packing women, their major struggles against discriminatory policies in the immediate postwar years had to be fought in each local packinghouse. There is little evidence that women in one plant were able to build on the success of women in another plant during the period from the Second World War until the WAC formed in 1958. No single issue exemplifies this better than the struggle to eliminate the marriage bar in Edmonton packinghouses.

1. The Marriage Bar

The successful intervention of Ethel Wilson, a seamstress at the Burns plant who was vice-president of her union local, in a 1949 incident made Burns the first Edmonton packinghouse to officially end its policy of laying off women who married.[68] The incident involved a recently married woman at the Burns plant who had been laid off and tried to register with the Selective Service Unemployment Insurance Commission (SSUIC) so that she could get another job, hopefully at another local packinghouse. The SSUIC refused to register the woman for re-hire because it believed that the packing union agreed with management's policy of laying off women who married. Wilson, who was labour's representative on Edmonton's Court of Referees, asked UPWA's Alberta staff representative, Jack Hampson, to clarify the union's policy on the retention of women who married.[69]

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[67] Sangster, *Transforming Labour*. 196-7

[68] Jack Hampson, (LAC, CFAW fonds, MG 28 I-186, PWOC and UPWA series, Vol. 20. Grievances, Burns, 1946-48, 1949). 16 August.

[69] The Court of Referees appears to have been an appeal board for complaints about SSUIC decisions.

President of the Burns local, Bill Chrapko, had refused to challenge the company layoff.[70] Hampson, who turned to national director of the union Fred Dowling for guidance, was told unequivocally, "It has always been our policy to follow strict seniority whether women were married or single and no local union has had the right to make any agreements changing this policy."[71] A layoff grievance was filed by another newly married woman worker at Burns just as Ethel Wilson was intervening in the decisive SSUIC case, but there is no evidence of the outcome, so the case was probably dropped, since management at Burns was forced by the union, through Wilson's intervention, to end its policy of laying off women who married.[72]

In 1949 things were very different up the street at the Canada Packers plant for women who married. Amidst severe layoffs, Ella Bendrien decided to live common-law rather than marry when she developed a serious relationship with her co-worker at Canada Packers, Alex Goruk. In an interview many years later, Ella (who became Ella Goruk) said that if they had married she would have lost her job, which she really needed as a young new hire who was also a single mother of a two-year-old son from another relationship.[73] Local management was able to flout UPWA's official seniority policy, which explicitly protected women workers who married, because local male union leaders did not support the policy established at the international level of their union. Ella's decision is especially interesting because Alex, who became her lifelong partner, was president of their union local at the time. This likely made him aware of the Burns case and the union's stance on seniority. It also meant he was

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[70] Hampson.
[71] Fred Dowling, "Re: Seniority Grievance," (LAC, CFAW fonds, MG 28 I-186, PWOC and UPWA series, Vol 20, Canada Packers Grievances, 1949). 18 August.
[72] Hampson.
[73] Ella took Alex Goruk's name throughout the years they lived together and after his death. Goruk, Interview.

well-positioned to challenge the company's policy. But Alex chose not to question the marriage bar for women: Five years later in correspondence with the national office Alex expressed concern about the injustice of a woman worker at Canada Packers losing her company bonus when she was laid off after getting married, but made no issue with the company's grounds for the lay-off.[74] It appears that the marriage bar at Canada Packers was eliminated some time later that year or was applied inconsistently because, in an interview, former Canada Packers worker Angie C. said she married in 1954 and was not laid off.[75]

Women who married at Edmonton's Swift plant, which was the largest packinghouse in the city with the most women workers in production, struggled particularly long and hard to remove the marriage bar that cost so many of them their job. Some of their strongest opponents were fellow workers, including single women. Faye Hiniuk turned to the highest ranked official in the union's Canadian district when she was laid off at the Swift plant seven weeks after she married in 1955, despite twelve years of seniority. Her letter to the union's national director, Fred Dowling in Toronto, revealed her clear understanding of the contract, which fostered a strong sense of entitlement. Hiniuk argued: "under the terms of the union agreement I am entitled to retain my job even after marriage."[76] Dowling supported Hiniuk, but management's plan to offer reinstatement to any woman laid off since the 1940s after marrying placed the union in a dilemma because it posed a threat to many women currently employed in the plant. As Alberta staff Representative Jack Hampson explained, the plant superintendent "made it quite clear that he had no intention of carrying one surplus girl, so

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[74] Hampson, "Alberta Staff Reports, Locals 233-511." Local 243, 14 June 1954; Local 280, 5 February 1956; Local 319, 12 May 1957.
[75] Angie C., Telephone Interview.
[76] Faye Mulek, (LAC, CFAW fonds, MG 28 I-186, accession 1984-0536, Box 44, Local 280, 1956). 11 January.

for every one that comes back one has to leave."[77] The grievance was finally resolved with a very limited reinstatement date that allowed only a handful of married women to reclaim their jobs. According to Karen Bozak, who began working at Swift in 1964 (just before she got married), a woman could marry after she was hired, but it was not until the late 1960s that the company hired married women.[78]

At Swift the conflicting material interests of married and unmarried women intersected with a strong sense of local autonomy to weaken both gender solidarity and the national cohesion of the union. Mary Stuber, an unmarried shop steward in the predominantly female Table Ready Meats department who, like Hiniuk, had twelve years of seniority, told Dowling: "Your disposition of the case is against the thoughts of the majority of this Local." Hiniuk's female co-workers, most of whom must have been unmarried, had circulated a petition to oppose Hiniuk's grievance, likely to protect their jobs. One of the complaints expressed by Stuber, who said she spoke "from not only my own opinions but from the majority around me," was that the national union leader's "blundering" by discussing the issue with local union leaders outside the Swift plant, particularly the provincial staff representative and a male leader from the Burns plant, had created this "mess." Stuber said although the layoff itself was not a new grievance, the local's leaders "had always been able to handle it quite well in the past to the satisfaction off [sic] all concerned."[79] Significantly, a similar petition at the Burns plant, which occurred just after Ethel Wilson intervened in 1949, failed to gain traction. A newly married Burns woman

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[77] Jack Hampson, (LAC, CFAW fonds, MG 28 I-186, accession 1984-0536, Box 44, Local 280 Edmonton, 1956). 5 March.
[78] Bozak, Interview.
[79] Mary Stuber, (LAC, CFAW fonds, MG 28 I-186, accession 1984-0536, Box 44, Local 280, 1956). 20 April.

worker laid off in 1950 was quickly reinstated after grieving the layoff. UPWA staff representative Jack Hampson felt that at Burns the company instigated the petition because work time was made available to single women circulating the petition.[80] The small locally owned Gainer packinghouse, which had an especially paternalistic management style, not surprisingly was the last to eliminate the marriage bar after a woman worker who married successfully challenged the policy in 1957.[81]

The very different timing, response of workers, and levels of escalation in the marriage bar petitions at Burns and Swift highlight significant differences in the two plants. One difference is the strong female leadership at the Burns plant. The fact that the Burns petition was quashed so early in the process of eliminating the marriage bar seems linked at least in part to Ethel Wilson's presence, which gave progressive voices more influence than at the other plants. The Swift petition also demonstrates that one of the obstacles Edmonton women faced as they struggled to challenge regressive policies was UPWA's decentralized structure, which, as I noted earlier, was designed to encourage militancy. This structure could stymie progressive initiatives when national union leaders perceived to be "outsiders" were seen as heavy-handed by workers in far-flung areas that had considerable local autonomy within the union.[82] The Swift petition also hints at a heightened sense of local autonomy rooted in Alberta's political culture, as we will see in Chapter Seven.

2. Seniority

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[80] Hampson, "Alberta Staff Reports, Locals 233-422." Local 233, 17 July 1950.
[81] ———, "Alberta Staff Reports, Locals 233-511." Local 243, 14 June 1954; Local 280, 5 February 1956; Local 319, 12 May 1957.
[82] Roger Horowitz and Dennis Deslippe have documented this trade-off between progressive ideals and more sustained militancy in the American district of UPWA. Deslippe, *Rights Not Roses*; Horowitz, *Negro and White*. Pamela Sugiman has demonstrated that even in the more centralized Canadian auto industry union local leaders easily circumvented official union policy aimed at protecting the jobs of women who married during the 1950s. Sugiman, *Labour's Dilemma*. 51, 57

Seniority does not appear to have been a major source of female activism in the late 1940s, despite layoffs that reduced the proportion of women in the local packing labour force from twenty-five per cent to twenty per cent.[83] Interviews reveal that during the immediate postwar years many women who married accepted the marriage bar, which likely reduced women's numbers without creating major conflict between men and women.

The one instance of resistance triggered by a seniority issue, however, occurred in the Burns plant where the union president reported to the union's national director that in response to "slackness in the female jobs...There was quite a bit of noise about the seniority rights being violated."[84] Provincial union staff representative Jack Hampson explained that a group of women rejected the union's argument that certain departments were "not fit for females [sic] employment." Instead, drawing on the egalitarian principles of the union, they told him, "there are some jobs in most departments that they can do and are therefore entitled because of their membership on equal terms."[85] President of the Burns local, Bill Chrapko, also found that, "some girls claim they could do some men's work."[86] The number of women involved in this grievance and its outcome are unknown, but it is clear these women had a strong grasp of their contract and the principle of union seniority. Their stance is noteworthy given that in 1945 the U.S. Meat Packing Commission instituted separate seniority lists when it was appointed to resolve meat packing industry labour issues in that country.[87] In

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[83] In her study of United Automobile Workers union, Pamela Sugiman found that the issue of single *versus* dual seniority lists became a major trigger for female activism at the end of World War Two as women suffered disproportionate layoffs because they could not transfer into other departments. ———, *Labour's Dilemma*. 232

[84] Bill Chrapko, (Edmonton: LAC, CFAW fonds, MG 28 I-186, PWOC and UPWA series, Vol 20, Grievances, Canada Packers, 1948). 30 March.

[85] Hampson, "Alberta Staff Reports, Locals 233-422." Local 233, 29 March 1948.

[86] Chrapko. 30 March 1948.

[87] Horowitz, *Negro and White*. 162

Edmonton local union leaders were still seeking clarification on seniority lists from the union's national director a year after the Burns incident and were told that the national office adhered to a single seniority list.[88]

In addition to Ethel Wilson's influence, structural factors may also have helped foster a distinctive culture of female activism at Burns in the immediate postwar years. As a smaller plant than either Swift or Canada Packers, Burns operated its pork killing floor for only half a day, which made a stint on the killing floor more tolerable because it was shorter.[89] Interviews suggest this made it easier for some women to accept work in non-traditional departments. Greater access to non-traditional jobs and the ability to perform them with competence likely encouraged a sense of entitlement and confidence that fueled activism. Although Gainer's was even smaller than the Burns plant, its highly paternalistic management style and lack of dynamic female leadership afforded little opportunity for women's activism. Despite being "hard hit by layoffs" following the 1947 strike, Alberta staff representative Jack Hampson reported that members of the Gainer local felt management "have not been unfair in any respect with layoff of workers."[90]

The Swift and Canada Packers plants had a larger contingent of women workers because of their more extensive processing divisions: Unlike Burns they each had a canning department, which employed predominantly women. This appeared to create a more rigid gender division of labour at the two larger plants than at Burns where workers had to be more

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[88] Dowling, "Re: Seniority Grievance." 30 March 1949.

[89] In Edmonton in 1947 the local Burns plant was roughly two-thirds the size of the Canada Packers and Swift plants, and women comprised 17% of the workforce compared to 25% and 33% at Canada Packers and Swift respectively. Gainer was roughly two-thirds the size of Burns with approximately the same proportion of women workers. Comparative figures are not available for other years. Canada, "Department of Labour Strike Documents, Canada Packers, Swift Canadian, Burns, Gainers, Edmonton," (LAC RG27 Vol 457, File 161, Reel T-4088, 1947).

[90] Hampson, "Alberta Staff Reports, Locals 233-422." Local 319, 12 April 1947.

versatile. In the 1950s a Burns supervisor "begged" Ellen B. and two other women workers to take a job in a male-dominated area working with a knife because "they couldn't get anybody – men – who could handle knives, to be butchers."[91] Canada Packers workers suffered the largest number of layoffs in 1949 – the union's membership was reduced from 370 to about 200 members -- fifty of those remaining were women. The company's determination to flout the union by retaining women with less seniority than men – presumably to save money – gave women workers the advantage, which helps explain why there is no evidence of female seniority grievances at Canada Packers during this period. Chief Steward Harold Steel claimed that women workers did not want these jobs: "The girls retained are replacing in many cases the jobs formerly occupied by males, which are heavy, manual labour. They are afraid to complain of hardships, knowing it may mean their jobs if they do so."[92] Filtered through records generated by male union officials, it is difficult to assess the voices of women workers at Burns and at Canada Packers, but they appear to provide a striking contrast during this crucial formative period in the development of the respective union locals.

Labour relations turmoil in the aftermath of the 1947 strike appears to have made seniority issues largely a moot point for women workers at the Swift plant where operating with strikebreakers created such intense bitterness that many workers never returned.[93] The only female strike breaker "stood her ground" under intense pressure from Swift picketers during the strike but left the plant shortly after work resumed because of "nasty" treatment on

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[91] Ellen B., Interview.
[92] Harold Steele, (LAC, CFAW fonds, MG 28 I-186, PWOC and UPWA series, Vol 20, Canada Packers Grievances, 1949). 18 March.
[93] Roy Jamha related this information anecdotally in a 1970s interview. Jamha, Interview Transcript. Hampson, "Alberta Staff Reports, Locals 233-422." General Reports, 25 November 1947.

the shop floor.[94] Also, Swift management in Edmonton officially enforced separate seniority lists for men and women with apparent impunity, even though the practice clearly violated the policy of a single seniority list upheld at the national and international levels of the union.[95] Given this context it is not surprising that there were no grievances from women workers at Swift over layoffs that violated the principle of seniority. Finally, Edmonton's booming economy provided exceptional job alternatives for those laid off, which mitigated the economic pressure that triggered female activism over seniority in other industrial settings.[96] The predominance of long-term employees among those interviewed also probably limited oral evidence of layoffs, since these women were clearly "survivors."

3. Equal Pay

Equal pay does not appear to have been a compelling issue for most women in Edmonton packinghouses during the late 1940s and the 1950s. There is no record of equal pay grievances filed by women workers, which is surprising, given the strong interest it generated in the Burns and Swift locals during the war. In interviews most women workers displayed little interest in the issue. The one exception was Gloria Kereliuk, whose first response in an interview when asked to expand on what she called "the women's rights thing" in the 1950s that she said she helped organize, was to express with some vehemence the injustice women in her department at the Swift plant felt about unequal pay: "If a man did the job he got paid more than if the women [did] -- like when we were in the pork trimming room we did not get paid as much as the men ... and that was not right, I mean that

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[94] Jamha, Interview Transcript.
[95] Dowling, "Re: Seniority Grievance." 30 March 1949.
[96] Also, Edmonton women could be more certain that their spouse would remain employed. See Sugiman, *Labour's Dilemma.*

really was not right!"[97] Kereliuk was seen by other women workers as exceptional in her pursuit of "women's rights." Former Swift worker Vicky Beauchamp attributed Kereliuk's determination to the fact that she performed a particularly demanding knife job in a department where the women tended to be physically taller and earned a slightly higher wage rate, which suggests Beauchamp felt that these women had a greater sense of entitlement. As noted above, demands for equal pay in this early period were contained in part by strict gender segregation of the work, which minimized overt wage comparisons with men, and by the dramatic wage gains women made in the 1950s, which made most packing women relatively content with their wage rate. Women workers were also probably aware of a general apathy among local male workers toward issues of gender equity, despite formal support at the national and international levels of the union for equal treatment of women.[98]

Instead of equal pay it was unfair wages that triggered the most wage-related activism among packing women in Edmonton during the 1950s. Women grieved violations of the contract over entitlements like sick pay and bonuses, and disputed job rates. A number of women challenged the company's tardiness about raising their wage from the probationary rate to the basic rate as stipulated in the contract because of an apparent oversight, or a broken probationary period.[99] One woman challenged the loss of bonus pay when she was laid off, another fought the loss of overtime when she came in late because of illness. Canada Packers Chief Steward, Harold Steele, who handled the latter case, said he was

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[97] Kereliuk, Telephone Interview I.
[98] In his study of women workers in the American auto, electrical, and meatpacking industries, Dennis Deslippe found that most male workers were apathetic toward issues of gender equity, and there is little to suggest that the situation was very different in Canada. Deslippe, "Rights Not Roses". 14
[99] Hampson, "Alberta Staff Reports, Locals 233-511." Local 280, 24 August 1954. This was also a common complaint among women workers in Alberta's Medalta Potteries factory around the same period. Loch-Drake, "Jailed Heroes and Kitchen Heroines."

dealing with "dozens of grievances for this kind of thing" when it was filed in 1955.[100] Underpayment was a chronic problem that affected women disproportionately throughout the period, perhaps because of the company's assumption that women workers were more passive than men. The persistence of these grievances throughout the period in the two largest packinghouses, suggests that many women workers were highly aware of wage-related contractual rights and were spurred by a sense of entitlement to defend them. I found no wage rate-related grievances filed by women at the Burns plant, which is difficult to interpret. Could this signal a more proactive female union culture that helped prevent contract violations from becoming grievances, or, more likely, a less effective records system?[101] As we will see below, the fragmentary nature of archival records, which contained nothing about important female grievances at the Burns plant that were related in oral interviews, suggests that the textual record provides a limited view of women's workplace activism. Nevertheless, the existing evidence, particularly interviews, indicates that in the 1940s and 50s women at the Burns plant were in the forefront on major issues affecting women. Significantly, women who worked at the Burns plant did not report incidents of rough treatment from older women workers when they started, unlike women at the three other plants, and there was no evidence of this kind of tension in the union records that survived.

Female Union Activism

When the women workers who attended UPWA's first union school in Edmonton decided to form the Women's Activities Committee (WAC) they had no difficulty finding the

[100] "Overtime Dispute," (LAC, CFAW fonds, MG 28 I-186, PWOC and UPWA series, Vol 21, Canada Packers Grievances). 23 May 1955.

[101] Burns Local 233 was the only one of the Big Three companies in Edmonton to leave no union meeting minutes.

resources to get up and running. In interviews Gloria Kereliuk had warm memories of the support women workers received from the union's national office and local male union leaders: "we got all kinds of help from the union people. And they, you know, open arms when it came to any time we needed assistance in anything. They were there for us and they fully approved of what we were doing." Kereliuk had fulsome praise for key union leaders like Henry Tomaschuk, a particularly hardworking union activist in the Canada Packers plant, and president of the Swift local, Peter Uganecza, who were "pillars," as well as Jack Hampson, UPWA's Alberta staff rep, and rank and file men: "we did get the support from the men as well, and it was a nice thing to know that we had the support of the men."[102] This support contrasts starkly with the response of local male union leaders nine years earlier when Ethel Wilson tried to let her name stand for election to the union's powerful national negotiating committee, as noted above.[103] Lack of access to external union positions prevented the development of strong interconnections among local packing women and between Edmonton packing women and packing women in Winnipeg or southern Ontario, who were most active on women's issues in the Canadian district of UPWA. This disconnectedness, compared to male workers, helps explain the significant time lag between important developments like elimination of the marriage bar in Edmonton's four packinghouses.

What made local male union leaders so supportive? The change in attitude can largely be traced to the growing impact of industry restructuring on the internal politics of the

[102] Kereliuk, Telephone Interview I.
[103] See Chapter One, page 1. In another comparison, in 1957 packing women in Winnipeg, who were among the most organized and activist packing women in the country, had to hold a fashion show and tea to raise money to send two of their female members to negotiations in Toronto, where they were allowed to observe, but had no vote. "Winnipeg Fashion Show and Tea Staged by UPWA Women," *Canadian Packinghouse Worker*, December 1957.

union in the late 1950s. It seems no coincidence that Edmonton's Women's Activities Committee formed shortly after packing women achieved equal pay in American master contracts in 1956.[104] This achievement created a major impetus for equal pay at the highest level of the union in Canada to protect male jobs. Industry restructuring in the United States had cut union membership numbers more than fifty per cent between 1953 and 1964 and women workers were laid off in much greater numbers than men.[105] UPWA locals had supported equal pay for equal work alongside clear gender segregation of the work since the earliest organizing years in the 1930s to protect male jobs and wage rates, generating more than 100 equal pay grievances in the U.S. during World War Two.[106] The threat cheaper female workers posed to male workers in the 1950s helped foster support within the male-dominated union for an equal rights campaign.[107] The campaign also gained impetus from African-American packing women who were quick to adapt UPWA's principle of racial equality to gender issues in the postwar era. African-American women were also impelled by a lower average household income than white packing women.[108] These forces helped eliminate the gendered wage gap from master packing contracts by 1956 in the United States.[109]

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[104] Deslippe, *Rights Not Roses*. 79

[105] UPWA's membership in the Big Four American firms dropped from 59,550 in 1953 to 26,600 in 1964. Horowitz, *Negro and White*. 254

[106] *Ibid.* 164

[107] By Susanne Klausen's reckoning, the long-term lack of support for women workers' concerns among the male-dominated union membership at Port Alberni's International Woodworkers of America (IWA) local in B.C. cast their 1958 decision to support elimination of the "substandard" female wage rates in a self-serving light. Once the gendered wage differential was eliminated management preferred to hire men instead of women for entry-level positions. Klausen, "The Plywood Girls." 227

[108] In the United States packing women's numbers declined from twenty-three per cent of the workforce right after the war to fourteen per cent in 1955. Deslippe, *Rights Not Roses*; Horowitz, *Negro and White*; Fehn, "Striking Women"; "UPWA International Conference on Women's Activities".

[109] Although an equal pay provision was incorporated in contracts with the major American packing companies in 1956 there is evidence that women in some plants were still being paid a lower rate for the

In comparison to the American context, the proportion of women in the Canadian packing industry declined roughly ten years later and less precipitously because the Canadian packing industry as a whole continued to expand and new technologies were not implemented as quickly: The number of Canadian packing workers grew from 21,879 in 1948 to a peak of 35,450 in 1981, after which it began to decline. The proportion of women workers in Canadian packinghouses remained constant at about twenty per cent from 1948 until roughly 1960.[110] Canadian packing women were also overwhelmingly white, which made them less able to adapt the equality rhetoric of the budding civil rights movement in the United States to gender discrimination than African-American packing women.[111] Finally, UPWA women, like other Canadian women unionists, lacked the "institutional arrangements" of women's departments in unions and in governments, which, in the United States, facilitated trade union feminist activism both within unions and in collaboration with middle-class women.[112] These Canadian contingencies help explain the district's weak performance on women's issues, which Mary Eady, UPWA's national newsletter editor, lamented after attending the international union's 1955 Women's Activities Conference:

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same work as a man until 1960. Deslippe, *Rights Not Roses*. 78-79. In her study of the meatpacking industry in Queensland, Australia during the 1950s Marjorie Jerrard argues that male self-interest was not the only reason the male-dominated union took up the fight for equal wages, Communist leadership also played an important role. The changing structure of the industry, which increased the proportion of women workers, as well as female activism, also were factors. Jerrard, "A Surprising Struggle?."

[110] Statistics Canada, *The Slaughtering and Meat Packing Industry and the Sausage and Casings Industry,* 1949-79; Statistics Canada, *Meat and Poultry Products Industries*, 1981-1984, cat. 32-232.

[111] In the United States African-American packing women "lobbied vigorously" against race discrimination after the war and by the early 1950s had succeeded in challenging management's racist hiring practice in some plants. Deslippe, *Rights Not Roses*. 79-80

[112] Sangster, *Transforming Labour*. 272. Joan Sangster has also pointed out that the few trade union women like UPWA's Huguette Plamondon, who held a senior position in their union's national office, were more conservative in their approach to the problems working women faced. They placed their faith in legislative and workplace reforms, unlike the new generation of socialist feminists who emerged in the 1960s and rejected capitalism, emphasizing a planned socialist economy. ———, "Radical Ruptures: Feminism, Labour, and the Left in the Long Sixties in Canada," *American Review of Canadian Studies* 40, no. 1 (2010).

"unfortunately, I had to report that in Canada we had not made much progress in carrying out the women's program adopted at the 1954 convention."[113] In 1957 -- a year after most American packing women secured equal pay -- the gap between male and female wages in Canadian master meatpacking contracts stood at a hefty 14.5 cents at a time when the average female packing wage was $1.25 per hour in Canada.[114]

This context suggests that Edmonton's first union school in April 1958 and the WAC that emerged from it were heavily influenced by the Canadian union leadership's larger agenda. The first topic of the local union school was equal pay, but published reports at the time suggest that UPWA's national leaders and male unionists were conflicted about this issue and the role of women in the industry more broadly. According to an *Edmonton Journal* news report, in the course about "women's problems" that kicked off Edmonton's union school, UPWA staffer Mary Eady emphasized the rising number of married women workers, most of whom worked "to provide necessities for their families and not buy fur coats, new cars, and other nonessentials." Eady's solution to the problem of growing numbers of married women in the plants, however, was "to raise wages to the point where the husband is making sufficient to support the family without the necessity of his wife working."[115] This view, which implied married women should not be working in the plants, was not consistent with an article by the national research director of the union that was published in the *Canadian Packinghouse Worker* six months earlier. In it John Lenglet said, "women workers are here to stay" because the wages a married woman earned were crucial

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[113] Mary Eady, "Increased Participation Shown by UPWA Women Members," *Canadian Packinghouse Worker*, June 1955.
[114] Canada, *Wage Rates, Salaries, and Hours of Labour, 1947-1983*; "District Conference Hammers out '56 Contract Demands," *Canadian Packinghouse Worker*, May 1956.
[115] "Talks on Role Women Workers," *Edmonton Journal*, 14 April 1958.

to the family budget: "The wife, more often than not, has to get in there and make the payments on the fridge, the washer and the baby's diapers. Our material standards are high, and to maintain them women work whether they find it emotionally and creatively satisfying or not."[116] The reports are consistent, however, in viewing packing women as less than full status workers compared to men in the industry. John Lenglet put the onus on women workers to enforce the principle of equal pay, highlighting the recent introduction of equal pay for equal work clauses in provincial labour legislation across much of the country: "Women in our unions can make this legislation stick if they raise the issue in cases where it is being violated."[117] But Lenglet did not encourage the male majority of union members to support equal pay in the next round of contract negotiations. The following year equal pay was twelfth on a list of fourteen union priorities, although by 1959 it had risen to third place.[118] National union leaders' inconsistent approach to the issue of equal pay, together with the grouping of local women workers in an organization with wives conveyed the idea that packing women were not real workers like men.

In Edmonton conflicting messages about the purpose of the WAC signaled both the influence of local male union leaders and rank and file activism among women workers rooted in their sense of entitlement as workers and union members. Gloria Kereliuk's 1958 report about the purpose of the WAC projects a different image from the idea she conveyed in interviews many years later. The report in union newsletters said the WAC aimed "to educate the women of our unions and the wives of our men, so that they may take an active

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[116] John Lenglet, "Fact Finding: Women in Industry," *Canadian Packinghouse Worker*, September 1957.
[117] *Ibid.*
[118] In the United States UPWA locals supported equal pay for equal work and a clear demarcation between male and female jobs from the earliest organizing years in the 1930s. Horowitz, *Negro and White*. 164. "Policy Committee Proposals Adopted by the Convention," *The Canadian Packinghouse Worker*, December.

part, side by side, with the men to build a better standard of living." Strangely, Kereliuk, who was single at the time and had not yet met the man she later married, added, "Our men earn a union dollar; our duty as wives is to acknowledge that the dollar was gained by negotiating by our unions. We want a government sympathetic to our needs -- one which is favourable to the working class."[119] This emphasis is quite different from Kereliuk's view in 2006 that women wanted an organization to advocate for themselves so that they were taken seriously. In interviews Kereliuk said the two main issues for women in 1958 were equal pay and the lack of dignity and respect women were accorded primarily by male managers, but also, sometimes, by men in their own union. Female shop stewards in particular found it very difficult to settle issues with management because management saw women workers as weaker than men: "We had to promote ourselves a lot. I could be doing the same thing as a guy and yet the guy was much more brilliant than I was kind of thing – he knew what he was talking about and I didn't." Kereliuk's emphasis was on management, but when asked about the attitude of male workers she said there were some male chauvinists, "there always are."[120] The emergence of a feminist movement in the late twentieth century may have coloured Kereliuk's memories of the issues that garnered support for the WAC from packing women in 1958. Nevertheless, the readiness and vehemence with which she recalled the organization -- especially compared to other women who were involved in it -- suggest that her emphasis on women as wives in the written report was shaped in part by the male union leadership whose support she valued highly. This may explain why it conformed so closely to the union leadership's notion of women as primarily "helpmates" to men rather than workers in their

[119] Blonsky, "Around Local 280."
[120] Kereliuk, Telephone Interview I.

own right.

Part II: Packing Women 1960-1979

Women's Auxiliary No. 7

The formation of an interplant women's organization within Edmonton's packing community did little during its brief existence to change the pattern of women's workplace activism. From its inception in April, 1958 the WAC operated more like a ladies auxiliary than a "women's rights" organization. Six months after it formed, the national union newsletter published photographs of Gloria Kereliuk and two other female members of the Swift local in a traditional female role -- giving a donation of meat to Edmonton steelworkers who were on strike, and helping to make lunches for the strikers. In May 1959 UPWA staff woman Iona Samis was flown to Edmonton from the union's Toronto office to charter Women's Auxiliary No. 7 in a formal event that included the union's Alberta staff representative, Jack Hampson, and other local leaders. **[Figure 13]** The new name placed the organization more clearly as a support for the union rather than a vehicle for actively promoting women's issues. By January 1961 the Women's Auxiliary was run by the wives of male packing workers, only one of whom also worked in one of the local packinghouses, Ella Goruk. A national union newsletter photo said Edmonton's Women's Auxiliary was "one of the most militant ladies auxiliaries of our union," although the activities that made them "militant" were not described.[121] **[Figure 14]** That fall the Women's Auxiliary encouraged Edmonton locals to hold a Ladies Night "to give wives encouragement to come out to the union meeting and see what goes on."[122] A 1962 report on the Auxiliary's

[121] "Union Maids," *The Canadian Packinghouse Worker*, February.
[122] "Auxiliary No. 7 on the Move," *The Canadian Packinghouse Worker*, September.

activities noted that several members attended a labour seminar and a union school in Red Deer, although there was no mention of recommendations made relating to women workers. Members had also served lunch for two of their local's union schools.[123] In January 1963 the auxiliary was pictured in the national newsletter packing Christmas hampers for needy families.[124] By 1965 Auxiliary No. 7 seemed to have disappeared because each Edmonton local was performing its own community service work separately.[125]

In interviews Ella Goruk, Jenny Kolba and Alice Jamha, who were all wives of packing men, remembered little about the Women's Auxiliary and its purpose beyond providing strike support, and hampers to needy families, compared to Gloria Kereliuk, who viewed the organization primarily in terms of its ability to educate women and advocate for them as workers. Ella Goruk could not remember why she got involved in the women's organization even though she worked at Canada Packers at the time and was treasurer of the Auxiliary for a number of years. Her strongest memory was of Gloria Kereliuk's dynamic role as the organizer: "Gloria was involved in the union more than anyone else and she wouldn't take guff from anybody."[126] Goruk's status as both a packing worker and the wife of a male packing leader, helps explain her lengthier involvement, since it was the wives of local male packing leaders who took over leadership of the organization. Alice Jamha (wife of former Canada Packers union leader Roy Jamha) and Jenny Kolba (wife of former Swift UPWA president Peter Kolba) also got involved, and in interviews recalled the service work

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[123] "Women's Aux. Active," *The Canadian Packinghouse Worker*, March.
[124] "A Helping Hamper," *The Canadian Packinghouse Worker*, January.
[125] In January 1965 *The Canadian Packinghouse Worker* published a photo of the executive of the Swift Women's Auxiliary, which conducted a raffle for the local's 20th Anniversary. There is no further evidence of an active Women's Auxiliary in any of the four local packinghouses after 1965. "Edmonton Celebrates an Anniversary," *The Canadian Packinghouse Worker*, January.
[126] Goruk, Interview.

and Alice Jamha's candidacy for school trustee during the years she was active in the auxiliary. The women did not mention anything about the issues women workers were facing at the time. Gloria Kereliuk's 1958 write-up and the organization's orientation toward charitable works rather than the needs of working women, also reveal the powerful influence of what Joan Sangster has called a "familialist ideology," which emphasized women's domestic role.[127]

A number of factors suggest that although Edmonton's Women's Auxiliary touched a chord in the female packing community, it was heavily influenced by the male membership. One was the traditional concept of an auxiliary, even though it encompassed women workers as well as the wives of male workers, rather than a women's committee. Laurie Mercier, who studied women's auxiliaries attached to the International Union of Mine Mill and Smelter Workers (IUMMSW) during the mid-twentieth century, found that in the American and Canadian Wests it was particularly difficult for women to have a voice in male-dominated unions because of a militant masculine regional identity men fostered that excluded women, forcing them to fall back on traditional auxiliary activities to gain influence. Mercier argues that the region's reliance on resource-based industries like logging, mining, and agriculture has tended to produce industry and union "narratives about regional work [that] reinforce the concept of the white, male 'wage workers' frontier'... [and] elicit images of tough, masculine outdoor work and independence."128 Although packing workers in the West did not work outdoors, the image of tough masculinity that they

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[127] Sangster, *Transforming Labour*. 272

[128] Laurie Mercier, ""Union without Women Is Only Half Organized": Mine Mill, Women's Auxiliaries, and Cold War Politics in the North American Wests," in *One Step over the Line: Toward a History of Women in the North American Wests*, ed. Elizabeth Jameson and Sheila McManus (Edmonton: Athabasca University press and the University of Alberta press, 2008). 317-18

cultivated drew on this regional stereotype, particularly in the 1970s, and had a similar effect in Edmonton union locals. Even though women represented twenty per cent of local UPWA membership (unlike many Mine Mill locals, from which women were almost completely excluded) they found it difficult to have a voice in the union and some, like Gloria Kereliuk, saw the new organization as a vehicle needed specifically "to promote the women."[129] The regional masculine stereotype seemed to blur differences between those who were wives and those who were workers, especially for the small but growing number of women workers who were both.

The timing of the Women's Auxiliary's formation suggests that it was largely driven by external forces. Mercier found that auxiliaries were most active from the 1930s until about 1960.[130] They went into decline in the 1960s because funding dropped off, there was more conflict over differing goals, and a growing number of women worked outside the home where they found other alternatives for political expression. The Baby Boom also meant that it was much harder for young mothers to get out of the house.[131] The late date at which an auxiliary was formed in Edmonton, and the auxiliary's short existence suggest that although there was enthusiasm for it among some women workers who had their own agenda, it was largely a product of the male union leadership, which provided ample funding only until 1965. It seems likely that after attracting the support of women who worked in the packinghouses because of its initial focus on the "role of women in the industry" the

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[129] Kereliuk, Telephone Interview I.
[130] Mercier, "Union without Women." Meg Luxton found a similar decline within the Canadian context. Meg Luxton, "From Ladies' Auxiliaries to Wives' Committees," in *Union Sisters: Women in the Labour Movement* (Toronto: Women's Educational Press, 1983).
[131] Doug Owram, *Born at the Right Time: A History of the Baby-Boom Generation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996).

Women's Auxiliary lost their support by failing to grapple with the workplace and union issues that touched them most directly.

Ironically, women workers' hard-won right to marry without losing their packing job helped to redirect the new women's organization and undermine its leadership in the 1960s. In an interview Gloria Kereliuk remembered the wave of wedding showers that swept the Swift plant once women felt it was "safe" to marry in the late 1950s. As Kereliuk explained, until then, "Women didn't believe they could marry, especially older women. They weren't going to take the chance, that was their livelihood."[132] She estimated that she attended as many as eight wedding showers in one year for packing women, one of which was her own after she became engaged in 1958 following a whirlwind four-month courtship. **[Figure 15]** By the 1960s the weddings and the pregnancies that most often followed had begun to limit some women's union activism. Gloria Kereliuk ended her union involvement shortly after she married in 1959 and bore her first child, who died of crib death at three months of age. Devastated by her loss, Kereliuk said she withdrew from most activities for some time. In interviews she could recall nothing about the Women's Auxiliary from the time when she lost her son. Later she found that she no longer had time for union work as she bore three more children during the 1960s. In 1969 Kereliuk and her husband decided that with their savings -- much of it Gloria said she accumulated while she was single -- the couple could afford to have one of them home full time with the children and she chose to leave the Swift plant ending a career of nearly twenty years.[133]

Industry Restructuring

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[132] Kereliuk, Telephone Interview II.

[133] As a homemaker Gloria Kereluk channeled her activism into community work, which won her many community service awards. ———, Interview.

Women workers began to feel the impact of industry restructuring more intensely in the 1960s when management implemented new machinery and new processes to reduce the number of local jobs, particularly in female-dominated departments where products like wieners, bacon, and sausage were more easily standardized. Persistent gender segregation of the work throughout the 1960s intensified women's job losses.[134] The number of Edmonton packing women peaked in 1959 at 452 then began to decline, falling thirty-two per cent by 1967 to 308 women. Local industry expansion then reversed this trend and the number of packing women rose to 426 by 1975, after which reliable figures are not available.[135] This means the city experienced a net loss of roughly twelve per cent of packing women between 1959 and 1975, compared to the number of Edmonton packing jobs lost as a whole, which was down only four per cent in the same period. Viewed as a proportion of the workforce, women workers in Edmonton's packinghouses dropped from an average of twenty-one per cent throughout the late 1940s and the 1950s to fifteen per cent in 1967, which was only slightly greater than the decline in other major Canadian packing cities.[136] Yet as we will see, there is limited evidence of female resistance to job losses in Edmonton union records or interviews, which contrasts starkly with the fierce seniority battles that occurred in American packinghouses and in the Canadian automobile industry where many women workers lost

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[134] It was in 1971 that equal pay was officially enshrined in the contract, giving women formal access to "male" jobs for the first time.

[135] After 1975 the number of women jumped because Statistics Canada began including poultry workers, most of whom are women. Statistics Canada, *Manufacturing Industries of Canada National and Provincial Areas*, 1972-1980; ———, *Manufacturing Industries of Canada Section G, Geographical Distribution*, cat. 31-209 (1956-1971).

[136] ———, *The Slaughtering and Meat Packing Industry and the Sausage and Casings Industry,* 1949-79; ———, *Manufacturing Industries of Canada Section G, Geographical Distribution*, 1956-1971.

jobs to men with less seniority, or were forced to move to keep their job.[137] Evidence of a major campaign in a Toronto packing plant to protest the lay-off of workers, which included a poster depicting women specifically, also suggests that Edmonton women workers were less vulnerable to job loss than packing women in other parts of the country.[138]

One explanation is that the layoffs in Edmonton were reversed by the late 1960s as the local packing industry expanded, unlike midwestern American packinghouses, some of which shut down.[139] Interviews reveal that although layoff was a constant spectre for all workers, the implementation of new machinery did not usually trigger mass layoffs on a permanent basis in Edmonton plants.[140] Vicky T., a former Burns worker, explained that the number of workers on the wiener line was cut in half following the introduction of new machinery in the 1960s, yet no one was laid off for more than two months because of seasonal demands for labour. Also, since Vicky was hired in 1960, women hired in the 1940s and 50s who had the most potential power and influence as activists, would have faced little threat of layoff. Finally, the attrition rate among women workers likely increased after the marriage bar was eliminated, in part because inadequate maternity leave rights became the next obstacle for women trying to keep a job in the packinghouse. It is possible that Edmonton's low unemployment rate meant more families had stable male employment, and women who were starting a family could often find alternatives to full-time packing work while their children were young. The high wages packing women and men earned also

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[137] Deslippe, "Rights Not Roses". Sugiman, *Labour's Dilemma*; Deslippe, "Rights Not Roses". Joan Sangster's study of packing women's grievances at the national level indicates that there was no major resistance to layoffs in the 1960s. Sangster, "Dscipline and Grieve."

[138] UPWA Local 114, "Bacon Slice" Poster (Toronto: LAC, CFAW fonds, MG 28 I-186, accession 1984-0536, Box 10, Canada Packers Grievance, 1969).

[139] Horowitz, *Negro and White*.

[140] The predominance of long-term employees among those interviewed also probably limited oral evidence of layoffs.

meant that some families -- like the Kereliuks -- could eventually afford to have one parent at home full time. The socially conservative culture of the province likely intensified these patterns.

Interviews reveal that women were more likely to use layoffs strategically. Plant-wide seniority meant women who could afford to chose a short layoff rather than work in a male-dominated department while waiting for a job they preferred. Some women workers shouldering the double burden of paid work and domestic responsibilities saw a short layoff as an opportunity to be home with their children through the summer, or to take on a short stint of part-time work, which was plentiful. Manufacturing data for the years 1953-1966, which measure the number of men and women in the Canadian packing industry on a monthly basis, show that women workers had much greater job instability. The number of women in local packinghouses fluctuated nearly twice as much on an annual basis as the number of men.[141]

Demographic Change

One important change after 1959 was the growing diversity of Edmonton's female packing workforce, which seems to have disrupted gender cohesion and may have limited resistance to women's layoffs. Female departments were often dominated by a core group of older women hired during the 1940s and 50s, some of whom remained single. By the late 1960s, when maternity leave was firmly established, a growing number of women were married -- and increasingly divorced or separated -- with children, which meant they had little time to get together off the job. Also, a new pattern emerged of older married women

[141] Statistics Canada, "The Slaughtering and Meat Packing Industry and the Sausage and Casings Industry 1949-79." Table 9, Production Workers, by Months, 1953-1966. Comparable figures are not available for any other time period.

returning to the packing house after their children were nearly grown, which intensified generational differences, one of which was levels of education. Sonia R. was laid off automatically at Gainer's when she married in the early 1950s, but returned to the plant in the 1970s after her daughter got a job there.[142] Another woman kept her job at Burns when she married in the late 1950s, because the marriage bar had been eliminated by then, but she was forced to leave when she became pregnant a short time later. She returned to the packinghouse after five years, but on a part-time basis until her children were grown, then began working full-time in the 1970s when they were teenagers.

Alberta's dramatic economic growth had produced a well-funded education system by the 1950s, and tensions sometimes erupted between an older generation of women workers with limited education and new hires who had completed high school, or even a post secondary degree. One woman interviewed, who started in the packinghouse during the 1950s, was open about many intimate aspects of her life but insisted that I not disclose her Grade 10 education level. Another woman, who started in the 1970s, felt that some female coworkers made her life "miserable" because she had a postsecondary diploma that allowed her to secure a job involving invoicing, tallying, and line-dating packages: "See the others didn't have education. They had all the seniority but I had the education. I was only in there 6 months and I got it ... This was an advantage I had over them and they really hated it."[143]

There is little evidence that the female packing workforce became significantly more diverse ethnically or racially before the first packing house shut down in 1979, likely because the shrinking number of jobs for women meant few new women were hired in the 1960s and

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[142] Diane D. and Sonia R., Interview.
[143] *Margaret, Interview.

early 70s.[144] Among the women interviewed, those hired in the 1960s and 70s were more often related to someone already working in the packinghouse compared to those hired in the 1940s and 50s. Also, unlike the 1950s when the vast majority of packing women were single and lived nearby, a growing number of couples chose to move out of the packing district to the suburbs, often after starting a family, which made it less likely that women travelled together to work and more difficult for them to meet socially outside of work. New hires increasingly had been raised in an urban environment, some arriving from distant provinces like Ontario and Québec where a very different political and economic environment could drive a wedge between them and union supporters.[145] Beverly P. left a minimum wage job and political turmoil from Quebec's Quiet Revolution when she moved from Montreal and started at Canada Packers in 1977 where she felt she made "good money." In a 2006 interview Beverly clearly resented the union: "I just knew they took money off my pay cheque and I didn't know what for. Then we got all these breaks – why? So when the plant shut down I thought, that's why -- too many pee breaks."[146] Ironically, Beverly's experience of low wages, harsh conditions and political instability in Montreal made her more critical of the union.

Edmonton itself changed dramatically, especially in the 1970s, when its booming economy sometimes made it harder to get together casually in public spaces outside the packinghouse. Beverly P. recalled that to go out at night in the 1970s "you had to get to the

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[144] It is significant that only one of the women I interviewed was hired between 1961 and 1974, and she was well connected -- her father was a union official at Canada Packers.

[145] Garth Stevenson has argued that by the early1980s Alberta's working class had "little continuity or cohesion as a class" because of the province's rapid growth. In 1981 twenty-nine per cent of the province's population had come from other parts of Canada and sixteen per cent were migrants from other countries. Stevenson, "Class and Class Politics in Alberta." 29

[146] Beverly P., Interview.

bar too early in Edmonton to get a seat at the time -- yeah, when we first moved here it was terrible. So we decided I'm not goin' out to the bars 7 o'clock in the evening – in Montreal we didn't go out to the bars til 9:30-10 o'clock."[147] This, combined with the fact that she had her first child shortly after starting work at the packinghouse, made it more practical to have house parties in each other's homes where they could bring the baby along. This made social gatherings more intimate but less inclusive compared to the groups of single women heading out to local public dance halls in the 50s. Family responsibilities also made it less likely that women entering the packinghouses in the 1960s and 70s were able to participate in union or company recreational activities like the softball team.

Women's Culture and Identities: "We were our own little bunch"

As an increasing number of Canadian women entered the paid labour force in the 1960s and 70s there was a growing acceptance of married women, particularly mothers with small children. Joan Sangster has demonstrated that during these decades many women responded with a stronger sense of "entitlement" and a "desire for change," which was evident in the testimony and letters submitted to the 1968 Canadian Royal Commission on the Status of Women (RCSW). There was growing resistance to the sex-typing of jobs and gendered wage rates. Many women also expressed frustration with the double burden imposed by a rigid gender division of labour that meant women performed a disproportionate share of unpaid domestic labour in the home on top of their wage labour. Amidst this ferment popular attitudes toward married women workers shifted from a focus on the moral decay of the family seen in the 1940s and 50s to greater acceptance because of the boost their

[147] *Ibid.*

income gave to family consumption. There was also growing awareness of the particular difficulties working mothers experienced.[148]

Within this larger context of growing female activism and popular debate there was more continuity than change in the culture of women workers in Edmonton packinghouses. Physically women in the two largest plants still dominated a handful of processing departments, despite industry restructuring and equal pay, which gave women formal access to all areas of the plant by the 1970s.[149] The vast majority continued to prefer jobs considered "female" to avoid the most difficult jobs and work environments. Diane D., who began working at the Gainer plant in the late 1970s, said she avoided working in "male" departments because she didn't want to work with "blood and guts," she wanted a "clean" job.[150] Older women workers who were comfortable in a job they could perform well were often particularly reluctant to accept jobs in "male" departments, where heavier jobs were difficult for them.[151] Friendships formed among women in gender segregated departments continued to be a significant factor shaping women's job preference. Beverly P., who worked at Canada Packers as a young woman from 1977 until the plant closed in 1984, found that socializing with other women on the line made tedious work tolerable. Beverly said her favourite job was sorting and feeding packages of cooked meat into a machine on the line

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[148] Sangster, *Transforming Labour*. Chapter 7, and p. 270.

[149] Former Swift worker Karen Bozak noted that Swift management combined the bulk wiener and packaged wiener departments into one room, but most women still worked in separate rooms in the two largest packinghouses, where they formed segmented groups that did not necessarily interact much with women outside their department walls. Bozak, Interview.

[150] Diane D. and Sonia R., Interview.

[151] In their study of American packinghouse workers Dennis Deslippe and Debra Fink found a deep generational divide between women who started working in the packinghouse during the war and immediate postwar years and young women entering packinghouses in the 1970s who were more likely to embrace greater gender equality and the new opportunities it presented. My small sample size may help explain why I found little evidence of young women eager to move into non-traditional departments in the 1970s. Fink, *Cutting into the Meatpacking Line*; Deslippe, *Rights Not Roses*.

because "that was a machine where everybody was close to each other...so you could chit chat and have a good time. Thank God, because you could do the job with your eyes closed..."[152]

The persistent stigma attached to women who worked in the packing industry provided another impetus for women to self-select "female" jobs that posed a lesser threat to feminine respectability. Vicky T., who worked at two packinghouses in Edmonton from 1960 to 1997, explained that when she told new acquaintances where she worked, "They'd say, 'Oh, you're in the office?' 'No, in the plant.' You ... were a little bit downgraded because you worked in the plant. Just general public. They always thought it was the riff raff that worked in the plant. They used to say, 'Oh, all the hookers, and all the rough people are working in the plant.'"[153] By the 1970s the high wages packing workers had commanded for several decades seemed to have conferred some degree of social status, if not respectability. Beverly P., who started at Canada Packers in 1977, said she had "no hesitation" about telling people she worked there and found it was assumed that her family income was higher than average because of it.[154]

Within the packinghouse the handful of women who accepted "male" jobs were often viewed harshly even by women co-workers because they challenged notions of appropriate female employment. In an interview, former Swift worker Karen Bozak's response to a question about the impact of equal pay conveys the disrepute that was attached to women who performed the heaviest or most disturbing jobs "that women just couldn't do." Bozak said she could not remember any women taking jobs that involved killing animals, like the

[152] Beverly P., Interview.
[153] Vicky T., Interview.
[154] Beverly P., Interview.

Sticker or the Stunner: "I can't see a woman wanting to do that. She'd have to be really something else."[155] Lucy, a former Burns worker in Calgary, who chose to work on the kill floor for three years in the early 1980s to earn a higher wage, knew that having an amicable relationship with male co-workers, which made the job tolerable, tarnished her sexual reputation among other workers in the plant, including the women she used to work with, who started rumours about her.[156]

In female-dominated departments women workers were also more able to distance themselves from the rough masculinist culture of the packinghouse, which seemed to intensify with the rise of class tensions in the 1960s and 70s. Women were seldom directly involved in rough physical behaviour on the shop floor, but even "packinghouse language" -- the stream of profanities used most often by male workers to assert masculine control of the job space -- could compromise the feminine respectability of women workers. Vicky T.'s emphasis on the "toughness" of women who adopted "packinghouse language" provides insight into the challenges women faced as they strove to integrate themselves into the workplace and protect their job entitlements while negotiating an often intimidating shop floor culture. Vicky, who started working at Burns in 1960, said

> ... men just would use the 'f' word whether women were around or not. I mean you were in a packin' plant you were supposed to be rough and tough ... women adjusted. To me it was just a normal word. At first you'd say, 'Oh, what kind of a place am I working in? Oh my god!' Because you didn't hear it you know. And then after I think you just erased it from your mind ... and there was some pretty rough women too. I remember we had some tough women there too that could use it pretty good.[157]

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[155] Bozak, Interview.
[156] *Lucy, Interview (Toronto: 2005).
[157] Vicky T., Interview.

Women who embraced the shop floor culture completely – behaviour from which Vicky distanced herself – were stigmatized.

There is evidence that the workplace culture among women at the Burns plant continued to be more cohesive than at the three other packinghouses. Vicky T., who started working at the Burns plant in 1960 at the age of 16, said: "we were a group of girls – so many of us were such good friends and we're still friends, even today. Because we grew up together, you know."[158] Vicky continued to work after marrying and was among the first to take two maternity leaves in the 1960s, building tight friendships with other young women who were going through the same stage in the life cycle. When the plant shut down in 1979 Vicky took a job at Gainer's, which was on the other side of the city, rather than at the Swift plant nearby because a few of her female coworkers from Burns were at the Gainer plant, and "we were kind of our little bunch again."[159] Ellen B., who started at Burns in 1952, left in the mid-1960s when she moved away to support her husband who wanted to start his own business. By the early 1970s she had separated from her husband and needed a good job to support herself and her three children. When she tried to get a job at the packinghouse in 1971, now in her forties, Ellen encountered considerable resistance: "the personnel manager didn't want me because I was old. Because of the money, the pensions, whatever. He pulled

[158] *Ibid.*
[159] *Ibid.*

all sort of shit. But the foreman I worked for before said, 'I want her, I need her.' The people I worked with before stood up for me and I got the job."[160]

In comparison, women who started in the 1960s and 1970s at the Gainer, Canada Packers, and Swift plants still reported initial hostility toward new workers. Diane D. felt older women in the Pork Wrapping Department at the Gainer plant in 1976 were "mean" to her when she started, at the age of eighteen. Most of the women refused to show her how to perform her job. A Metis woman, who Diane called a "half-breed," took her under her wing, helping her learn the ropes. The Metis woman's outsider status in Edmonton society, where Aboriginal peoples ranked at the bottom of the social hierarchy, may have made her more empathetic than Euro-Canadian or European immigrant women whose social power gave them more influence over behavioural norms in the department.[161] Beverly P. found "there was the odd corker or two" in most female-dominated departments when she started at Canada Packers in 1977 at the age of nineteen, but said she did not take them seriously. These were generally older women workers who had been in the plant for many years and were very good at what they did, but were "nasty" toward newer workers. Beverly said one woman in the Bacon Slicing Room, where she started, insisted "you had to do it her way even if you found a better way."[162] At eighteen in 1964, Karen Bozak felt some of the women she worked with "were really nasty." Finding she was much younger than most of the women in her department Bozak chose not to associate with them. Bozak left after six months when she got pregnant but returned in 1968 and found that the atmosphere had not changed a lot. Asked whether she attended work-related social events like the annual

[160] Ellen B., Interview.
[161] Diane D. and Sonia R., Interview.
[162] Beverly P., Interview.

Christmas party, Bozak explained: "People weren't that friendly ... Everybody was guarded because there were a few that were real suckholes and they would run to the foreman. So you watched what you said and what you did – you usually kept your nose to the grindstone and that was it."[163] In interviews a number of women spoke positively about a particular foreman that they liked working for, but did not seem to develop strong bonds with women coworkers. Bozak felt that the atmosphere improved in the 1980s, and eventually she was able to develop friendships she valued.[164] Although my interview sample is small, when combined with the available grievances, below, the evidence suggests that the female shop floor culture continued to be more conducive to gender activism at Burns than at the other Edmonton packinghouses. There was a strong shift, however, in attitudes toward the union, based on interviews with both young and middle-aged women who started at the three other plants in the late 1970s.[165]

Edmonton packing women responded to the culture of the packinghouse in ways that reflected complex identities within a more diverse female labourforce. Margaret, who began working at one of the bigger packinghouses in the mid-1970s and stayed for more than twenty years, established social distance from co-workers because she felt her postsecondary school education and values made her "different." Margaret took a job at the packinghouse after divorcing her abusive husband because she needed a steady job with good pay and

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[163] On the other hand, there was also no indication of extraordinary subservience to bosses. In an interview a former Canada Packers foreman said he was "still mad" about the way a woman worker was able to flout his authority when she booked off sick for a liaison with the man's boss at a local bowling alley and was found out. Yet he emphasized that he "didn't want to lose her" even though she was not a "good" worker. This suggests that the ongoing labour shortage in Edmonton strengthened the position of women workers.*George, Interview.

[164] Bozak, Interview.

[165] I did not find any women to interview from the Burns plant who started in the late 1970s, perhaps because hiring dropped off before the 1979 shutdown.

hours that fit her two children's school hours. She planned to stay only five years until her pre-teen children were raised, but could not leave because of the downturn in the local economy in the 1980s. Margaret took pride in herself as a clean-living and responsible mother who, through careful economizing supported her children single-handedly. She emphasized that her "values" were very different from the values of most people in the packinghouses who "drank and smoked:" "And swearing. I never heard a woman swear and then I walked in there .... It just blew me away."[166] Margaret's attitude, however, was the exception among those interviewed. Most women took in stride the people they worked with and the rough culture of the workplace, downplaying or dismissing the profanity and ribaldry of both men and women. Beverly P., who started at Canada Packers around the same time, said: "It was probably no different than being in the army ... . I worked with women so I didn't hear it much. We told dirty jokes, but nothing too vulgar."[167]

Margaret extended her critique of packing coworkers beyond the workplace in ways that revealed both her own middle-class values and the continuing pragmatism of most packing women in the 1960s and 70s who were often willing to eschew conventional gender norms when necessary. She depicted coworkers as irresponsible and immoral for marrying and divorcing repeatedly, and bearing children outside of marriage: "It was nothing to run into someone who was divorced four or five times. In one family there were five children working in the plant and they were all divorced. Five times, you have to wonder." She claimed that because their "morals are different" many packing women "bragged" about grandchildren born out of wedlock to daughters who had "dropped out of school." Because of

[166] *Margaret, Interview.
[167] Beverly P., Interview.

this and other "differences" Margaret said she chose not to attend social events, or even to tell those she worked with that she had children: "I just did not care for the people I worked with. Sorry to say I don't like vulgar language, I don't like the smuttiness that they make about women, men and children."[168] Other women, however, displayed a matter-of-fact attitude toward couples who did not marry, similar to that of women who entered the packinghouses in the 1940s and 50s. Karen Bozak, who worked at the same plant as Margaret, said there were not many couples there who lived common-law in the 1960s and 70s, "because in those days people didn't do it that much, but nobody cared."[169]

Another continuity was the sense of pride and even pleasure in working hard that a number of women revealed in interviews. There was a significant shift, however, in the attitude toward the union of women workers who started in the 1970s. The union was more often seen as an obstacle that got in the way of their desire to simply work hard at their job. Karen Bozak, who started at Swift in 1964, enjoyed the job because, "if you liked to work that was the place to be. Some people don't like to work, they'd sooner sit around and do nothing. I'd sooner work and get paid for it." Bozak resented those who did not like to work because they "made it harder on anybody else."[170] Beverly P., who started at Canada Packers in 1977 would be "back in a minute" if she could: "I thoroughly enjoyed it. You might have worked hard, but personally, you didn't work as hard as we should have worked for the money you got."[171] The role of the union in securing that pay is either ignored or is seen as destructive in these workers' memories, some of which were coloured by the 1986 Gainer

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[168] *Margaret, Interview.
[169] Bozak, Interview.
[170] *Ibid.*
[171] Beverly P., Interview.

strike and particularly the 1997 strike that shut down the city's last packinghouse.[172] Diane D., who moved from the small south-side Gainer plant when it shut down in 1981 to the large Swift plant, felt angry toward management and union leaders who backed the final strike: "My bitterness was that I went to work every day and I put in my best possible job and it was like, does hard work and dedication mean nothing? I mean am I a nothing in the scheme of things? You know I always believed that hard work meant something and would be recognized some day but apparently it means nothing."[173] For at least some women who arrived at the packinghouse in the 1970s their ability to work hard was an important source of identity.

Although it was less pronounced in the later period, in interviews, women workers still displayed a sense that in principle women were naturally faster and more adept at some jobs. Karen Bozak, who started at Swifts in 1964, rejected the label "skill" for women's ability to perform at a faster pace on the bacon line, yet explained matter-of-factly, "A woman can work twice as fast as a man scaling bacon, fixing bacon and that. Men aren't dexterous enough, they're more clumsy."[174] In the closing moments of a telephone interview, when asked if there was anything she wanted to add, Beverly P., who started at Canada Packers in 1977, said women were fast with their hands: "Probably the sexist thing – we know what we're doing. Working with our hands ,,, we can cut those weenies just as fast as any man..."[175] The comment, which came out with humour and an apologetic nod to her perceived political incorrectness, reveals nevertheless an underlying conviction about

[172] One of the women interviewed chose not to picket during the 1978 packing strike, another expressed nostalgia about the four strikes she participated in, although she said she felt less willing to strike after the 1986 Gainer strike.
[173] Diane D. and Sonia R., Interview.
[174] Bozak, Interview.
[175] Beverly P., Interview.

women's superiority in particular areas of the packinghouse. The narrative tone of most women workers when commenting on conflict between men and women that occurred after equal pay came in also reveals a deep-seated sense of gender difference. Dolly L. said when equal pay came in at the Burns plant most women felt entitled to get help from male workers with the heaviest parts of jobs they performed. In her account she assumed women were justified in asking for assistance, describing some men as "nasty" because they started to refuse the extra heavy lifting for women: "... not everybody, but some. I guess they didn't like the liberation thing."[176] Former Canada Packers worker Don Schuster recalled during an interview both the "apprehension" and the bravado of a number of "stout" Ukrainian women who accepted nontraditional jobs in the 1970s to earn a higher wage: "...they said 'I can do this job better than a man can, or just as good,' and they went and they did."[177] In sum, interviews revealed women's complex and sometimes contradictory understanding of themselves as workers who were equal to yet different from men.

Packing women still earned exceptional wages in the 1960s and 70s compared to the female average, and the gap between the male and female base rates in the industry was finally eliminated, but in relative terms their wages did not increase as dramatically as in the earlier period.[178] Packing women's average wage dropped relative to women in the Canadian manufacturing sector throughout the 1960s and 70s from 131 per cent in 1959 to 126 per cent in 1969 and only 105 per cent in 1979. **[Table 4]** As a percentage of the base rate for male workers, the female base rate had risen only slightly from ninety-three per cent in 1959 to

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[176] Dolly L., Interview.
[177] *Frank and *Winnifred, Interview.
[178] The base rate was the rate a worker was paid after an initial probationary period of roughly one to six months ended (which varied by company and over time). The average wage is a statistical average revealed in government records.

ninety-six per cent by 1968. The gendered gap in the base rate was finally eliminated when negotiators secured equal pay in the 1971 master contracts. Of course gender segregation, which the majority of packing women continued to embrace in the 1970s, meant most women were still confined to the three lowest wage levels. Nevertheless, by the 1970s women's average wage rate as a percentage of the average male rate had risen to ninety-four per cent in the Canadian packing industry, largely because so many " male" jobs had been deskilled.[179]

Nevertheless, women entering the packinghouse in the 1960s and 70s felt that they earned a "good" wage and it remained a major source of pride and dignity for packing women because of the vital role it allowed them to play in their household economy. Vicky Beauchamp, who started at the Swift plant in 1959 at the age of nineteen emphasized her ability to make a real difference in the lives of her parents and six siblings after she left the family farm, while supporting herself on her packing wage.[180] For many years she said she roomed with family friends in the city to keep her living expenses low and traveled every weekend to the farm to help out her parents both physically and financially: "I knew my dad didn't want to give up farming... he just couldn't see himself moving off the farm." Her help was reciprocated when Beauchamp decided to buy a house in Edmonton at the age of twenty-six, and her family came to her aid, returning loans that she had made in previous years to help her brother with livestock costs and to buy furniture for her parents. Beauchamp's father co-signed the mortgage, using his farm as collateral. Beauchamp, who "just barely

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[179] Male and female base rates are from Canada Packers collective agreements. Canada, *Wage Rates, Salaries, and Hours of Labour, 1947-1983*; Leacy, Buckley, and Urquhart, *Historical Statistics of Canada.* Series E60-68.

[180] Vicky Beauchamp did not marry until she was thirty-five years old, which, at the time, was later than average.

finished Grade 12," also took great pride in her ability to support three siblings who left the family farm to attend school in Edmonton: "Today I actually feel very good because one of our brothers was actually able to continue and become a superintendent of schools." She said she also took her parents on trips to Banff, Vancouver, and other areas throughout the West. The couple was quite poor while raising their seven children until late in life when gas was discovered on their farm. Her mother had never traveled beyond the small farm community near their home.[181]

Those who had spouses and those raising children on their own also took credit for playing a crucial role in their family economy. Women who had a partner emphasized their ability to pay down the mortgage, go on trips, and put children through school. Those who were single mothers were especially emphatic in interviews. Margaret, a former Swift worker who felt she received no help from her family or her ex-husband, prided herself on her ability to put her two children through secondary school by carefully managing her packing wage.[182] Former Burns worker Ellen B. expressed a similar sentiment:

> I had to fight my way all the way through. Because once I got separated I knew I had to go back to work because I didn't want to give up the house and wanted the kids to go through school ... The kids got an education, they grew up in a home and they were able to do things that they wanted to do. I told my kids, 'Burns put the food on the table ... they paid for the house.' So I always looked at it that way.[183]

[181] Beauchamp, Interview.
[182] *Margaret, Interview.
[183] Ellen B., Interview.

Like many packing women, Ellen's vital role in her household economy became a major impetus for resistance and activism. Her reaction to an incident of male harassment provides a telling glimpse of this, but also of dominant notions of packing femininity and the culture of both the shop floor and the union local. Ellen was one of the first three women to be placed in the Pork Cutting department at Burns in the 1970s and she accepted the job because, unlike her previous job, it allowed her to be home when her children returned from school. She said she encountered virulent verbal harassment from some of her male co-workers because they said she and her female co-workers worked too fast: "we got nothing but shit abuse. They did not want us and what we did was wrong. Not wrong – women are naturally faster than men, and we weren't aware that we could do in an hour what it took them three, four hours to do."[184] Some of the men became particularly "macho" and "rude" when Ellen accepted overtime, not realizing that it had been refused by men in the department:

> Some of these guys started 'bionic woman' and all this bullshit. This is where I made a mistake because I swore, and I told the guy to 'fuck off and leave me alone. You've got no right.' And then the steward came up to me and told me to apologize to him, and I says 'Bullshit, you fuck off.' So then the president came, and said, "Do you realize what you've done?' I says, 'Yes, and if you're going to ask me to apologize to either of them forget it. I will not -- they started it.'[185]

Impressed by her assertiveness, two men in the department asked Ellen to run for secretary-treasurer of the plant's union executive. Ellen was stunned when she won handily with

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[184] *Ibid.*
[185] *Ibid.*

nearly eighty per cent of the vote, becoming one of the few female executive officers of an Edmonton packing local. She held that position until the plant shut down in 1979. Ellen derived a great deal of satisfaction from her union work, but lamented the toll it took on her family. In one incident she said her young daughter became almost "hysterical" when Ellen did not get home until very late during a strike after signing picketers' cheques as Secretary Treasurer of the union: "It wasn't easy to leave them in the evening."[186] This incident provides insight into why many packing women decided against union work.

Ellen B.'s anecdote also illustrates the persistent belief among many packing women in the 1970s that they were naturally faster than men. Her initial sense that swearing was "a mistake" reveals another important continuity in female worker identities. Most packing women still saw the use of profanity and aggressive behaviour as a threat to female packing respectability. The tendency in interviews for packing women to emphasize a strategy of "walking away" when they were faced with shop floor intimidation or harassment persisted among those who started working at local packinghouses in the 1960s and 70s. Just as in the earlier period, however, women who endured on the job said they found ways of speaking up. Although Ella Goruk said she found the shop floor culture at Canada Packers "quite rough," and coped by trying not to get involved, in one instance when this did not work, the mild-mannered Goruk explained how she handled those who tried to intimidate her, telling them: "'Don't tell me what to do – I've got my boss up there in that quarter,' and they didn't bother [me] after that."[187] Similarly, Margaret, who started at Swift in the late 1970s, emphasized that she refused to use packinghouse language and won favours from her supervisor because,

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[186] *Ibid.*
[187] Goruk, Interview.

unlike most packing workers, she was "polite." Yet later in the interview she described an incident where she confronted a male co-worker who had been bullying her. She bluntly asked him if he had been a bully in school and she said: "after that he didn't bully me any more."[188] The reluctance of women workers to acknowledge their assertiveness on the shop floor highlights the threat it often posed to female packing respectability. Finally, Ellen's willingness to draw on the rough culture of the shop floor to protect her job demonstrates the importance of family responsibilities as a major factor driving the activism of packing women.

Grievances

When defined very broadly, the number of grievances increased significantly after 1959. There is evidence of twenty-three cases across the four Edmonton packinghouses from interviews as well as formal union records in the earlier period. During the 1960s and 70s that number rose to thirty-six. Since many of those instances were revealed in union minutes for the period 1965 to the late 70s, which were available only for the two largest plants (Swift and Canada Packers), cases at Burns and Gainer's are almost certainly underrepresented. My evidence of grievances is also limited by a notable degree of amnesia among male union leaders about the activism of women workers more generally. One persistent pattern, however, is the distinctive activism of women at the Burns plant.

Edmonton packing women were handicapped in the 1960s by a government that continued to lag much of the country in developing human rights legislation, which women

[188] *Margaret, Interview.

in other jurisdictions used with some success to challenge discriminatory practices.[189] In Ontario unionized female autoworkers developed a major campaign to add "sex" to the Human Rights Code as grounds for discrimination in the late 1960s when women were being laid off in significant numbers because of gendered jobs and seniority lists. Their 1970 success forced all Ontario contracts -- including the master contracts negotiated in that province by UPWA -- to eliminate gendered wage rates.[190] In the U.S., Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, which prohibited discrimination on the basis of sex, as well as race and other aspects of identity, was used by American packing women to end the formal gender-typing of jobs in U.S. packinghouses and create the ABC system that was imposed in Edmonton in the late 1960s. In socially conservative Alberta, however, where women captured less than five per cent of seats in the provincial legislature until 1989, it was particularly difficult for women to gain political traction on workplace issues.[191]

1. Maternity Leave

Once the marriage bar had been dismantled, maternity leave became an important frontier for activism among Edmonton packing women. The first maternity leave clauses entered master contracts in the mid-1950s, which was a few years before most women won

[189] In Ontario, which passed the first equal rights legislation in Canada in 1951 (the Female Employees Fair Remuneration Act), a woman UPWA member of a non-meatpacking local was among the first to file a case under the Act in 1952, which demonstrates the willingness of some union women to use legislative tools in their struggle for equality. Shirley Tillotson, "Human Rights Law as Prism: Women's Organization, Unions, and Ontario's Female Employees Fair Remuneration Act, 1951," *Canadian Historical Review* 72, no. December (1991).

[190] Sugiman, *Labour's Dilemma*. 165-70. See also the film *Made in Dagenham*, which documents the struggle by women sewing machinists at a major Ford plant in the U.K. to achieve equal pay legislation. Their 1968 achievement marked a turning point that inspired North American trade union women. Nigel Cole, "Made in Dagenham," (Maple Pictures, 2011).

[191] Trimble, "A Few Good Women."

this right under provincial and federal legislation.[192] The leave was unpaid, and seniority stopped while a woman was on leave, but maternity leave marked a major improvement in women workers' job security. Canada Packers began offering maternity leave one year before Angie C. had her first child in 1956. Both in 1956 and again in 1958 when Angie delivered twins, she was able to take a six-month unpaid maternity leave. Angie did not recall any activism on the part of local women to put the policy in place.[193]

Women who worked at the Burns plant around the same time, however, had vivid memories of a 1959 maternity leave grievance. In an interview, Ellen B., who bore three children between 1959 and 1968 while working at Burns, applauded co-worker Stella Skrzekowski for filing a union grievance that ended the company's policy of laying off women who had a second pregnancy. At the time Burns would grant only one maternity leave to women. If they got pregnant a second time they lost their job. Ellen said Skrzekowski, "is the one who went to town fighting it." Although the two women were not close, Ellen had kept a copy of Skrzekowski's 2001 obituary in a personal scrapbook in remembrance of her former co-worker's 1961 initiative, which allowed Ellen to keep her job when she had her second and third pregnancies.[194] The union supported Skrzekowski's grievance, but it did not figure largely in Ellen's memory. Instead, she recalled with deep admiration this woman co-worker who Ellen felt blazed a trail for others like herself to follow. Former Burns worker Dolly L., who had a child in 1961, also remembered the grievance well and lauded Skrzekowski's achievement: "She did all the fighting and so

[192] Prentice, *Canadian Women: A History*. 385
[193] Angie C., Telephone Interview.
[194] Ellen B., Interview.

many women benefited by it ...."[195] Even Vicky T., who worked at the plant during this period but did not have her first child until 1965, recalled the incident as a breakthrough from which she benefited.[196]

Like other unionized women in this era, Edmonton packing women often found that local male officials were more supportive than national officials.[197] At Canada Packers an unmarried pregnant woman tried in vain to qualify for maternity leave in 1965, even though she was several months short of the twelve-month maternity leave requirement. The woman received strong support from her local union president, Alex Goruk, who emphasized to an official in the union's national office: "If she is ineligible for this leave it means she has just lost her job."[198] The national official who handled the case decided against trying to "stretch" the agreement and refused to support her.

At the Swift plant lack of communication among women workers hampered the ability of some women to take a maternity leave. The Swift plant, which employed the largest number of women workers, left no evidence of maternity leave grievances. The experience of Karen Bozak, however, reveals that misinformation from a company representative combined with lack of cohesion among women workers to prevent Bozak from keeping her job when she became pregnant with her first child six months after she started working there in 1965. Bozak was told by the company nurse to quit: "She didn't bother to tell me that I could have taken time off..." Bozak only worked for six months before leaving because of her pregnancy, and in that time had not yet built a network of friendships with

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[195] Dolly L., Interview.
[196] Vicky T., Interview.
[197] John Lenglet, (LAC, CFAW fonds, MG 28 I-186, accession 1984-0536, Box 11, Canada Packers, 1965). 5 April. Sangster, *Transforming Labour*. Chapter Five.
[198] Alex Goruk, "Report on Local Relations with Management," (LAC, CFAW fonds, MG 28 I-186, accession 1984-0536, Box 11, Canada Packers 1965). 2 April.

female co-workers who could have let her know her options. This lack of communication reinforces the impression that the women's culture at the Swift plant was not very welcoming toward new hires.

Diane D.'s experience with maternity leave at the Gainer plant suggests that women workers did not unite around gender issues in a highly paternalistic labour relations environment. Diane was able to secure a special arrangement with her supervisor, who knew her father, when she had her first child in 1978. A layoff shortly after she returned to work from a one-year leave of absence generated considerable hostility toward her from co-workers because, unlike other women who were allowed much shorter leaves, she also retained her seniority: "that bothered people because they figured that I should start as a new employee."[199] Diane's easy dismissal of the tensions generated by her preferential treatment reinforces the impression that there was less cohesion among women at the Gainer plant.

2. Seniority

In Edmonton former Burns worker Peter Zotek recalled that seniority lists were merged in the mid-1960s, which placed that packinghouse in the forefront of change, once again.[200] Conflict over separate seniority lists was still being resolved at the two largest Edmonton packinghouses, however, in 1971 when equal pay was implemented. At Swift women were still experiencing "problems" with a single seniority list in April because the company "will not permit female operators in four departments."[201] In a separate but related

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[199] Diane D. and Sonia R., Interview.

[200] American packing women, who were quick to use Title VII to defend their seniority rights, instigated greater enforcement of a single seniority list throughout the union by the mid-1960s, but there was often local resistance. Horowitz, *Negro and White*. 238 For Canadian women the United Electrical Workers' international office enforced a single seniority list when the Canadian division of the union was willing to allow two lists. Sangster, *Transforming Labour*. 93

[201] Swift Local 280, "Swift GMM Minutes." 28 April 1971.

case a woman with twenty-five years of service at the Swift plant challenged the company's gendered retirement policy in 1968, just before it was eliminated.[202]

At Canada Packers management policies triggered the greatest number of seniority grievances by women workers and forced involvement of the state. The union local consulted Alberta Human Rights Commission officials when a woman who grieved a lay-off before she had passed probation was initially told by the plant superintendent that he did not want to keep her because "it would be one more woman who needed to be placed."[203] Management had also tried to insist that all new employees be capable of performing duties anywhere in the plant, which would have disqualified twenty-five to thirty per cent of existing employees. In a letter to a national union official, local Chief Steward Harvey Shaw revealed that until this point local leaders had not challenged the company's gendered lay-off policies: "...we have always had two seperate [sic] seniority lists, therefore the females were laid off and the men transferred to different departments. This has changed now that the Human Rights Act has come into force."[204] In consultations with AHRC the union and company were told that these policies were discriminatory and the government would take action, which appeared to end the matter favourably for women workers.[205] The nature and timing of layoff grievances filed by women workers suggests that women were highly attuned to their contract rights and were in a better position to challenge management in the 1970s once they had secured equal pay and AHRC had been established.

3. Equal Pay

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[202] *Ibid.* December 1968.
[203] CFAW Local 243, "President's Notes."7, 20 September 1971.
[204] *Ibid.* 8 September 1971.
[205] *Ibid.* 7, 20 September 1971.

Evidence of equal pay conflict occurred mainly at the Swift plant, perhaps because Swift employed the largest number of women workers locally. Although I found only one equal pay grievance filed by a woman worker at Swift, it seems that the way in which management implemented new equipment and processes in the 1960s often heightened gender tensions over equal pay. An anecdote related by former Swift worker Gloria Kereliuk suggests that management may have made a concerted effort to disrupt the cohesive and militant female culture in its Pork Trim department by disbanding it around 1965 -- not long before conceding equal pay in Canada. In Pork Trim, where women had a particularly strong sense of entitlement as skilled women workers, the direct comparison with men made possible by their use of a knife intensified women's sense of injustice at receiving lower rates of pay for the work of trimming meat. When the department was disbanded, Kereliuk said management replaced the women with men at higher wage rates, generating considerable resentment among the women. According to Kereliuk, productivity in the new all-male department was never equal to what the women they replaced could achieve. Kereliuk said management claimed that it disbanded the department because women workers were taking too many washroom breaks and "didn't get along very well." But the timing suggests that the department was made available to male workers being displaced from more skilled jobs with the introduction of new equipment. It seems likely that management also wanted to defuse the women's growing wage resentment and disrupt the strong female worker identity that had developed in the department among women who worked with a knife but were paid less than men. None of the women workers were laid off. Instead they were redistributed into a variety of departments, and retained at their current wage rate on other more typically

"female" jobs. Significantly, Kereliuk, the most dynamic figure in the department, was assigned a job in the spice room where she worked alone, which limited her influence.[206]

The lone equal pay grievance filed by a woman at Swift in 1968 provides further evidence that some women workers resisted the efforts of management to pay a lower gendered rate after technological changes were introduced. In this case the woman worker insisted that she should be paid the "Male Bracket 2" rate, and rejected the company's argument that the job had been reconfigured for women and paid a lower "Female Bracket 2" rate because a male worker in the job "has considerably more physical work."[207] The outcome of the company's attempt to change the job classification to "female" is unknown, but the incident demonstrates that women who performed jobs directly comparable to men's at lower rates were most likely to critique the gendered wage differential. Rising tensions over wage rates on newly configured jobs likely intensified local grassroots pressure to secure equal pay in 1971.

Grievances over unfair pay within specifically female jobs were still more pervasive in the 1960s and 70s than equal pay. A number of women at Canada Packers and Swift filed grievances to increase wage rates set for jobs involving new equipment. At Canada Packers in 1971 women in the Bacon Slice department questioned why their job rate was two levels lower than the rate set for operating the same kind of equipment in the canning department.[208] At Swift in 1972 women successfully challenged the job rate for Wiener Peeler, raising it to

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[206] Kereliuk, Telephone Interview I.
[207] S.S. Hughes, (LAC, CFAW fonds, MG 28 I-186, accession 1984-0536, Box 44, Grievances, Local 280, 1968). 20 November; 3, 4, 6 December.
[208] Harvey Shaw, (LAC, CFAW fonds, MG 28 I-186, accession 1984-0536, Box 11, Canada Packers Grievances1971). 14 October.

the top bracket for women workers, and pressed for back pay.[209] Women also filed grievances over loss of pay for statutory holidays, illnesses, and a probationary period that exceeded the terms of the contract. These grievances demonstrate that many packing women grasped the subtleties of their contract terms and felt a strong sense of entitlement as workers.

4. Married Women's Benefits

A group of fourteen women at Burns were the first packing workers in Edmonton to prod local management to pay for married women's benefits, turning to the state when their own union gave up around 1971.[210] The company assumed that married women were covered by their husband's benefits program. Vicky T. joined the group because her husband earned less than she did and had no benefits with his job. Former Burns worker Dolly L. was also part of this case because, although as a civil servant her husband had benefits, but he had to pay fifty per cent of the cost and Burns covered the entire cost.[211] Vicky felt keenly the injustice of women workers being treated differently because they were married: "I had to pay it out of my own pocket. So I said, that's not fair to us women, we're supposed to be

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[209] Swift Local 280, "Swift GMM Minutes." April 1972; March 1974.

[210] Vicky T. thought this group grievance was filed in 1967 or 1968. Vicky T., Interview. Ellen B. recalled that it occurred after she separated from her husband around 1971, which meant she was eligible for benefits and did not join the group. Ellen B., Interview. A letter from a union official at Canada Packers in September, 1971 mentioned a benefits case before AHRC at the time that would decide whether women should get the same benefits as men. It was likely the Burns case. CFAW Local 243, "President's Notes." 7 September 1971. A Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOIP) request I filed with the Provincial Archives of Alberta (PAA) to search Alberta Human Rights Commission (AHRC) case records for the period 1968-1972 failed to turn up any documentation of this case. PAA FOIP Archivist Laurette Miller, who conducted the search in November, 2006, explained that the case may have been resolved before it reached the panel stage, which means it would not have generated records. If the case was resolved quickly by an AHRC investigator, it suggests that UPWA was not very progressive within Alberta's own political context.

[211] Dolly L., Interview.

equal as far as the wages and benefits and we're not getting benefits because you're discriminating because we're married and we fought it and we won it."[212]

According to Ellen B., who was secretary-treasurer of the Burns local at the time, the union refused to support the women's grievance, forcing them to turn to Alberta Human Rights Commission (AHRC), which was newly established.[213] AHRC's support provided the women with crucial leverage and, after a series of meetings over roughly nine months, they were able to overturn Burns' discriminatory benefits policy. The vivid memories revealed in interviews by women involved in this incident contrast starkly with the complete absence of this important grievance in union documents and in the memories of former male union leaders who were interviewed. The strong sense of entitlement based on egalitarian values is notable, although it is impossible to know the extent to which the memories of women interviewed have been reshaped by a vibrant women's movement during the intervening years.

At approximately the same moment that married women at Burns were pressing their benefits claim at AHRC, a married woman at Canada Packers had to demonstrate that she had no financial support from her husband before the company would pay her benefits. The woman sought company-paid medical benefits coverage early in 1971 because her husband was working "steadily" in British Columbia where he had applied for coverage with that province's health care system. By November 1971 provincial health care authorities decided that the woman and her three children must be covered under the Alberta system because she was employed and resident in Alberta. Her husband was covered under the B.C. system. It

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[212] Vicky T., Interview.

[213] AHRC was established in 1973. Age and sex had just been added to Alberta's Human Rights Act in 1971. Riddell, *The Evolution of Human Rights Legislation in Alberta, 1945-1979*. 6, 12

is unclear whether the separation was for employment reasons or because of marriage breakdown. In January, 1972 an official in the national office of the union accepted the company's decision that the woman would have to prove she was legally separated or claim her children as dependents for income tax purposes before the company would pay for her benefits.[214]

Nearly three years later married women were still pressing local Canada Packers management for benefits. In December 1974 in response to a query from AHRC about its definition of a "breadwinner," Canada Packers explained it was "the spouse which is the major source of income" in a family. The Commission accepted this definition because "it does not discriminate against sex or marital status." The company promised to provide a list of names of male workers who were denied benefits because, although married, they did not earn more than their spouse. According to a union official, management was "willing to review the status of all married female employees and there may be some that may be entitled to have their premiums paid."[215] It is not clear how this issue was resolved at the local Canada Packers plant. At Swift seven married women workers came together in April, 1976 to grieve management's refusal to pay their husband's Medicare costs. A union ultimatum a month later giving the company "one week to act" on the Medicare case brought quick results and on September 1st that year women were able to get family coverage on the same terms as men.[216] At Gainer, there was no evidence of benefits grievances filed by women workers.

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[214] William J. Beggs, (LAC, CFAW fonds, MG 28 I-186, accession 1984-0536, Box 9, Local 243 1972). 4 January.

[215] CFAW Local 243, "President's Notes." Alex Goruk, 5 December 1974.

[216] Swift Local 280, "Swift GMM Minutes."Chief Steward's Report 6 April, 4 May and 7 September 1976.

The benefits cases reveal that several factors helped women packing workers achieve success. One was the ability of women to come together to file a common grievance. Women workers at Burns were not the only ones to launch a grievance over unequal access to benefits in the 1970s, but married women at the other plants who filed an individual grievance were still struggling to secure benefits some years later. The benefits grievances also demonstrate the crucial role of the state in helping women effect changes when they did not get strong support from their union leadership. At Canada Packers, where there is no evidence of women filing a common grievance, the company's "breadwinner" policy likely excluded the majority of married women but very few married men.[217]

5. Sexual Harassment

Older women who started working in the packinghouse before the union came in likely remembered an era when women were expected to give sexual favours to foremen to get or keep their job. Even with a maturing union, however, the packinghouse was characterized by more continuity than change, because sexual harassment (a term that was not used until well after this period) was a persistent issue and the union's impact was mixed. There is a relative paucity of sexual harassment grievances in the union records and even in oral accounts, but, based on studies of other male-dominated workplaces, particularly Debra Fink's first-hand experience in an American packinghouse, this evidence probably does not accurately reflect packing women's experience in Edmonton. Instead, the near silence is

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[217] Census figures reveal that on average married women comprised more than a third of the female labour force by 1971.White, *Sisters and Solidarity*. 46. In an undated partial list of forty-seven women workers at Canada Packers compiled by management in relation to the benefits issue around 1970, thirty-two of the thirty-seven married women listed had no paid benefits, and one of the six women who were separated had no paid benefits. The list indicated that the company paid for benefits coverage of women who were widowed and the one single woman listed. CFAW Local 243, "President's Notes." "Married Women List," circa 1969.

likely a function of male-dominated union records combined with women's reluctance to confide incidents to an "outsider" that would reflect badly on a community of workers that included their husbands, boyfriends, fathers and brothers. Beverly P. recalled with humour being whistled at by a male worker when she walked into the lunchroom her first day on the job at Canada Packers in the late 1970s. Her brother, who helped get her the job, told his co-worker to "leave her alone, she's married." The men's behaviour both reflected and reinforced a pervasive assumption that single women workers were sexually available to men.[218]

The one incident of sexual harassment revealed in union records throughout the entire study period was reported by a woman who worked in the cafeteria at one of the plants in the early 1970s and asked the union to support her decision to keep the cafeteria curtains closed at night while she cleaned. A male supervisor had ordered her to leave the curtains open at night so that he could observe what she was doing, but she felt that because she wore a mini skirt and bent over constantly, "having someone watch from the outside is embarrassing."[219] There is no word on the outcome of this incident, but it suggests that at least some women saw their union as an effective vehicle for redressing harassment. Incidents related during oral interviews demonstrate that some women who were the target of vicious rumours or sexual harassment turned to the union but with limited effect. In the 1950s the union responded to a woman worker's complaint of sexual harassment by moving the male worker to another department. There is no indication that he was penalized formally.[220] He may have continued to harass women in other parts of the packinghouse. Similarly, in the 1970s a

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[218] Beverly P., Interview.
[219] CFAW Local 243, "President's Notes." 3 December 1974.
[220] Jamha, Interview.

woman worker said she filed a grievance with her foreman and her union steward when a male worker in a department where she was temporarily stationed "put scissors up my butt and wouldn't leave me alone." She found "once they spoke to him he got worse." She said the male officials decided there was nothing they could do because she was only in that department for two weeks, but the woman said for her "it was the worst two weeks of my life."[221]

Working Conditions

One significant change in the 1960s and 70s was an increase in the number of grievances about working conditions, which seemed to signal a growing confidence and sense of dignity among packing women rooted in their identity as workers. At Canada Packers women pressed the company for the same clothing allowance as men in 1960, and in 1969 two women in the Canning Department complained that they were not given sufficient notice under the contract before being placed on a night shift. In 1972 women workers lobbied successfully to have the lunch hour shortened so that they could be home a half hour earlier at the end of the day when their children returned from school.[222] In 1975 a woman at Canada Packers grieved the "cramped" size of the Wiener Room after the company made major changes.[223] At Swift's women grieved the cold temperature in their department and the state of the ladies dressing room, which was "overcrowded."[224] These kinds of grievances do not appear in the records during the 1940s and 50s.

Female Union Leadership

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[221] Beverly P., Interview (Edmonton: 2006).
[222] Goruk, Interview. Canada Packers Local 243, "GMM Minutes 1966-1973." 14 February, 13 March 1972.
[223] CFAW Local 243, "President's Notes." 1975
[224] Swift Local 280, "Swift GMM Minutes." 1967

Ethel Wilson's ability to succeed as a female union leader was in part a function of the unique rivalry and labour shortage in Edmonton's wartime meatpacking industry. In the postwar era attitudes toward women's leadership capabilities hampered ambitious packing women who wanted to make a difference in their union. The fact that women stewards were taken less seriously by management than male stewards, yet being assertive could make them the target of abuse, created a conundrum for women workers. Former Swift worker Gloria Kereliuk said one woman union steward who was in the Canning Department for many years was recognized as an effective worker advocate, but "took a lot of flack" from management because "she could be a bull dog and stand her ground."[225] The gendered assumption that women were inherently passive was pervasive among women workers as well as men. When asked about her experiences with management in the packing industry, Vicky T., who started at Burns in 1960, said she preferred to work for a man rather than a woman: "I didn't care much for women supervisors. I found that they didn't have the courage to speak up if they knew something was being wrong. They didn't want anybody being mad at them so they would ignore it instead of correct the problem."[226] The contradictions inherent in dominant understandings of femininity may have discouraged some women from taking on responsibilities like being union steward, which forced them to deal with conflict. The tendency for women who were assertive to be accorded little respect and labeled "rough" when in positions of power, also made it more difficult for women to speak out about the injustices they saw.

[225] Kereliuk, Telephone Interview I.
[226] Vicky T., Interview.

The double day posed another significant obstacle for women who sought a major role within the union. As we saw with Gloria Kereliuk, unpaid domestic work and caregiving often forced women to withdraw from the high level of union activism that they were able to sustain while single and childless. A number of women who worked at Edmonton packinghouses in the 1960s and 70s when they had young children felt union work was too onerous. Diane D. and her mother Sonja R., who entered the small south-side Gainer plant in the late 1970s, agreed in a 2004 interview that most packing women took very little interest in the union. Diane felt that women "weren't interested – let the guys do it, as long as [the women] were getting a raise" because women did not want the "responsibility" of union work.[227]

An analysis of Ethel Wilson's labour movement achievements, motives, and strategies, provides insight into the particular opportunities and constraints Edmonton packing women faced during the war and postwar years. Wilson was the only woman to be elected vice president of an Edmonton local and to rise rapidly through the ranks of local union positions during the war, briefly becoming active at the international level of the union. Financial need likely made Wilson an early convert to UPWA: she took a job as seamstress at Burns in 1938 to support her three children after her husband deserted the family during the Depression, remaining in the job until 1962.[228] Kept home to help run the farm during World War One, Wilson had only a Grade 8 education and seized every opportunity presented by the union to become educated about contemporary political economy, and to develop skills in

[227] Diane D. and Sonia R., Interview. For a recent study on the barriers women in union leadership positions continue to face see Adriane Paavo, "Union Workload: A Barrier to Women Surviving Labour-Movement Leadership," *Just Labour* 8, no. Spring (2006).
[228] "Ethel Wilson Clippings File." Val Huene, June 1987.

public speaking and political negotiation.[229] Wilson held the position of vice president of the Burns local from at least 1946 to 1951 and possibly earlier. She also became a delegate to Alberta's UPWA Joint Council when it formed in 1951. Outside her union Wilson played an active role in the labour movement as Secretary of the Edmonton Labour Council from 1948 to 1952, and as labour's representative on the Unemployment Insurance Commission's Panel of Appeals from 1950 to 1956.[230]

Ethel Wilson's labour movement success seems to have been fueled in part by a genuine interest in the lives of her co-workers. During her twenty-five years in the packinghouse Wilson became an adept negotiator and used her influence both formally and informally to advocate for those in need, particularly women workers. In an interview Ellen B., who began working at Burns in 1952 at the age of twenty-one, remembered Wilson as a woman "who did a lot for us ... She was instrumental in bringing things to the management and somehow or other the management seemed to listen to her. She was very charismatic in her ways." Working in the Laundry Department repairing uniforms Wilson "got to meet just about everybody" and "knew all their problems and then she would act on them." In one instance during the 1950s Ellen recalled a malicious rumour circulating in the packinghouse about a young woman worker "fooling around with one of the guys – which was not true at all – and I remember [Wilson] talking to her and then straightening all that out, and then making sure that everybody was aware that that was gossip and nothing else." According to Ellen, Wilson played a distinctive role supporting women who experienced this kind of harassment in the packinghouse: "the union would go after the other areas and she helped us

[229] Hampson, Interview Transcript.
[230] Helgason, "Ethel Wilson."

more in that line."[231]

Described by Jack Hampson as a "good-living woman" of the Pentacostal faith who did not drink or smoke, Wilson took seriously the problems of young single working-class women who dominated female jobs at Burns in the 1940s and 50s.[232] During World War Two her presence in the Burns local, which developed the first and most effective equal pay campaign, seems no coincidence.[233] Ethel Wilson's politics reveal an amalgam of ideals typical of the early twentieth century women's suffrage movement, which was a vital force on the political landscape in Alberta when she came of age during the years of World War One.[234] Like Alberta's high profile female suffragettes, Wilson embraced the language of maternal feminism, emphasizing women's unique experience and values as guardians of the home to justify their inclusion in the public sphere.[235] In her report to UPWA's 1947 international convention Wilson said the resolutions for equal rights for women were meant for every UPWA member, not just the women, yet urged women delegates in particular to become more involved in the union, because, "the hand that rocks the cradle rules the world and it is the training that we give our children that is going to count, as to women keep their place in the world, or if they become a minority group and remain a minority group."[236]

It is difficult to know why Ethel Wilson played no further role on UPWA's

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[231] Ellen B., Interview.
[232] Hampson, Interview Transcript.
[233] See Chapter Four.
[234] When Ethel Wilson was made a provincial cabinet minister in 1962 one of her first actions documented by the local press was a "courtesy call" she paid to the home of Irene Parlby, Alberta's first woman cabinet minister. Although Wilson said the "most delightful luncheon" was not a political call, it seems likely that Wilson saw 95-year-old Parlby as a role model because of her life-long advocacy for rural women and children in Alberta. "Compare Notes," *Edmonton Journal*, 12 February.
[235] Prentice, *Canadian Women : A History*. 189
[236] "UPWA Proceedings, May 6-8, 1947", (WHS Mss 118, Box 13, Constitutional Conventions 1947-1948).

international women's committees after 1947. At that convention Wilson was the only female representative for the Canadian district of the union and chaired the international's Women's Committee, yet she never attended another international convention and played no formal role as a female activist within UPWA at the national level. One explanation is that Wilson was simply unable to attain delegate status again at the international level because she lacked support at the local level. It is also possible that Wilson found that her brand of activism was not a good fit with the priorities of a largely African-American female leadership, which was emerging within key Chicago-based UPWA locals after the war. During the 1947 convention Wilson suggested that to get the attention of single women workers the union should offer education sessions about sewing, knitting, and beauty culture. She also advocated a decentralized approach to fighting race discrimination within the union, emphasizing anti-discrimination in the United States "where you have a good deal of it," which suggests that she felt race discrimination was not a significant issue in union districts like Canada, which were mainly white.[237] At the time African-American packing women were beginning to lobby for attention to the particular problems non-white women faced, such as race-segregated departments, dressing rooms and cafeterias, as well as issues that were strictly about gender.[238]

Most women did not aspire to union positions and there was usually little electoral support within the membership for those who did. Apart from Ethel Wilson, Edmonton packing women were elected only to the positions of secretary-treasurer or, most often,

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[237] *Ibid.*

[238] "9th Constitutional Convention Resolution on Women's Activities," (WHS, Mss 118, Box 362, 1954, Women's Activities.).

recording secretary in their local, and there were few of them.[239] When Ellen B. won the position of secretary-treasurer in the 1970s she was quite aware that only two women had been on the executive of the local before her, one of them Ethel Wilson. Ellen's experience in the position provides insight into the difficulties women faced. She explained that the union executive was "a boys club, a men's club, and you were female, you didn't belong." She said she had to "fight" her way through for about a year, after which "you were accepted -- they forgot you were a woman." This did not mean that the men embraced gender equality, however, because Ellen said they "didn't like" the fact that she became one of the first graduates of a course on retail meat-cutting.[240] In union meeting minutes for the two largest locals from the mid-1960s to 1979 very few women were nominated for executive positions. [241] Given that women were still as much as seventeen per cent of the workforce in the 1970s, their near absence in these meeting minutes is significant.

There is also evidence that in the 1970s local male union leaders colluded with management to eliminate female radicalism. Peggy Morton, who worked at Canada Packers briefly before going on to become a union and peace activist, feels that when she took a packing job in the 1970s specifically to become an activist, male Edmonton union leaders collaborated with management to get rid of her. After participating in a labour school and just three days before her probationary period ended Morton said: "I got laid off on orders

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[239] There is no evidence of an Edmonton packing woman attending national contract negotiations, or holding any of the most powerful executive positions in their union local.

[240] Ellen B., Interview. When women were elected, it was most often to positions on the Sick Committee or the Social Committee, which were less influential, and adhered to a dominant gender norm of nurturing femininity.

[241] In 1966 Marg Warring declined a nomination for the position of vice president at the Canada Packers local yet accepted a nomination for the grievance committee, but she was not elected. Warring was the only woman mentioned in the minutes during the entire year, apart from two women who retired. Canada Packers Local 243, "GMM Minutes 1966-1973." 7 December 1966.

from above, without my foreman having any idea why I was being laid off...It seemed to have been a mutual understanding between the union and the management that they'd be smart to get rid of me."[242]

Finally, the structure of the union itself hampered female activism. The union's decentralized organization and emphasis on democratic process made it difficult to guarantee Edmonton packing women a political voice. This problem was aggravated by the disproportionate drop in women's numbers by the 1970s, particularly in Alberta.[243] Those women who were active in Edmonton packinghouses lacked a strong alternative structure of women's committees to foster contact among women in packinghouses locally and across the country. Women's committees, although mandated by the international office by the early 1960s, were rare before the 1980s because many local male union leaders did not see their importance. Also, Canadian trade union women lacked the institutional support provided by women's bureaus both inside and outside the labour movement. UPWA did not have an equivalent to the United Automobile Workers' Women's Bureau, which actively supported women at the local level.[244] Although women held staff positions at the union's head office, these positions afforded them less influence than a job in the field, like that of provincial staff

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[242] Peggy Morton, Interview Transcript (Alberta Labour History Institute/Ground Zero, 2005). Morton became a member of the Marxist-Leninist Party and ran for election in Edmonton's federal riding Edmonton Centre in 2004, 2006 and 2008. See: http://www2.parl.gc.ca/Sites/LOP/HFER/hfer.asp?Language=E&Search=Det&Include=Y&rid=1284

[243] Statistics Canada, *The Slaughtering and Meat Packing Industry and the Sausage and Casings Industry*, 1949-79; ———, *Manufacturing Industries of Canada Section G, Geographical Distribution*, 1956-1971.

[244] American trade union women found support in the federal government's Women's Bureau established in 1920, and later in the United Auto Workers Women's Bureau, established in 1944. Joan Sangster, "Radical Ruptures: Feminism, Labor, and the Left in the Long Sixties in Canada," American review of Canadian studies 40, no. 1 (2010). 3; Pamela H. Sugiman, *Labour's Dilemma: The Gender Politics of Auto Workers in Canada, 1937-1979* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994). 37. Gabin, *Feminism in the Labor Movement.*

representative, who more actively shaped negotiating priorities.[245] As a result, there was much less contact between activist women in Edmonton's various packing plants compared to male union activists who met regularly, usually with financial support, at city, provincial, national and international meetings. In interviews Gloria Kereliuk said she had heard of Ethel Wilson but lamented the fact that the two never met.

The 1960s and 1970s was an era of significant change for women in Edmonton packinghouses because of industry restructuring, demographic shifts within the female packing labour force, and the emergence of a revitalized women's movement. During these years women filed an increasing number of grievances, which dismantled several sources of gender oppression. Their grievances, both formal and informal, and interview responses reveal that many packing women felt a growing sense of their dignity as workers and entitlement to treatment equal to men, yet retained a gendered notion of their difference as women workers. Also, the advantages of centralized bargaining continued to be more circumscribed for women workers, who were forced to fight in each local plant for gendered gains like maternity leave and paid benefits for married women. Equal pay, which was finally secured and enforced through centralized bargaining in 1971 -- fourteen years later than in the United States -- was an anomaly in this respect. By the 1970s the establishment of Alberta Human Rights Commission (AHRC) gave Edmonton packing women a new vehicle for challenging management when union efforts failed them. But there was still little opportunity for women workers to assume leadership positions and network across the local industry as they shouldered the bulk of unpaid domestic labour in the home and continued to face an intimidating masculinist shop floor and union hall environment.

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[245] White, *Sisters and Solidarity*. 116

Conclusion

Women who worked in Edmonton's four packinghouses during the decades following World War Two when a national system of pattern bargaining was in effect, cultivated an image of themselves as industrious, capable, and respectable workers who could outperform men, to bolster their tenuous claim to paid work. Most packing women responded to a male-dominated workplace and union culture that valued aggressive and intimidating behaviour by choosing to remain in female-dominated departments where they often developed supportive bonds with other women workers. Over time an increasing number drew on the new grievance system that was put in place to protect their job and improve their terms of work. Inspired by UPWA's democratic and egalitarian principles or, more often, compelled by their vital role in the family economy, women workers pressed grievances that allowed them to continue working through marriage and pregnancy and, by the 1970s, secured them equal pay, equal benefits, and access to jobs previously designated "male."

Yet the activism of Edmonton packing women during this era remained isolated and episodic -- it did not coalesce into a campaign to challenge their discriminatory treatment. Faced with an oppressively masculinist shop floor and union hall environment, and lacking a union infrastructure to consistently support female organization, few packing women chose to become actively involved in the union. Nevertheless, salient differences in the female activism in each packinghouse can be traced to both structural factors and the influence of key female personalities. Ethel Wilson's dynamic presence at Burns, the smallest of Edmonton's Big Three packinghouses, appears to have been a catalyst for trade union feminism, fostering a sense of entitlement that consistently made Burns women among the

first to challenge discriminatory treatment. Gloria Kereliuk, who worked in the packinghouse with the largest number of women workers, played a vital role in the short-lived organization of packing women across the city in the late 1950s. Union involvement helped these women to gain the confidence, public speaking skills, and political awareness, which helped them become politically engaged in their community. Despite the strong leadership skills of these women and others -- not least the ability to assert themselves with those who would try to intimidate them -- they were unable to progress into the upper levels of the union, largely because of gendered assumptions about women's leadership abilities in the workplace and the domestic responsibilities they shouldered in the home.

Other structural factors also constrained the activism of Edmonton packing women. The city's booming economy, social conservatism, and the relative racial homogeneity of Edmonton's female packing workforce mitigated the experience of unemployment and racial discrimination that triggered concerted activism among some women in the Canadian automobile industry and in American packinghouses. Also, the fractured nature of Canada's human rights legislation until the 1980s, as well as the financial cost of overcoming geographic distances for women packing workers scattered from coast to coast, limited the impact of gender equity campaigns that developed among packing women in other regions. We will now turn to the ways in which notions of trade union masculinity acted as another structural force shaping packing women's opportunities for union leadership.

Chapter Seven: The Rough and the Respectable -- Gendering Union Leadership

In 1949 at a union meeting in Edmonton, Stan Solomonson, president of the city's Swift packing local "viciously" assaulted Canada Packers delegate Roy Jamha "with his fists" when Jamha was critical of his leadership.[1] Solomonson then hit UPWA's Alberta staff representative Jack Hampson, who intervened in the attack to separate the men. Hampson had echoed Jamha's critique during the meeting by saying the Swift local "was slipping." The two physical assaults occurred at the highest level of the union in Alberta, a regular meeting of the Packinghouse Workers Joint Council. The Joint Council represented all Alberta UPWA locals and was created to promote networking within the larger labour movement and encourage political activism. Criticism of Solomonson at the meeting had centred on his "arbitrary" decision to reduce the Swift local's per capita tax for the provincial Joint Council from twenty-five cents to five cents without following democratic processes. Earlier, while he was president of the Joint Council, Solomonson had also violated the union constitution by accepting a motion to change the Council dues without majority support.[2]

Local union leaders reacted strongly to the assaults, emphasizing that physical aggression and the breach of democratic process were unacceptable behaviours for a trade unionist. In a letter to the executive of the Swift local, Alex Goruk, who was president of the Joint Council in Edmonton, asserted that all trade unionists in attendance were "disgusted" by the "brutal attack," which threatened "the interests of the labor movement as a whole."

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[1] Alex Goruk, (LAC, CFAW fonds, MG 28 I-186, PWOC and UPWA series, Vol 48, Jack Hampson Correspondence, 1944-59, 1949).1 October.
[2] A.T. Stephens, (LAC, CFAW fonds, MG 28 I-186, PWOC and UPWA series, Vol 48, Jack Hampson Correspondence, 1944-59, 1950). 19 October.

Goruk emphasized that Solomonson's "vicious and irresponsible tactics" violated the union's principle "that it is the democratic right of every trade unionist to express his opinion...without fear of being struck down." He insisted that members of the Swift local remove their president from the council "immediately" or "discipline" him to prevent a recurrence of the behaviour.[3] In comparison, A.T. Stephen, the international vice president of the union who came to Edmonton to investigate the incident, did not comment on the physical aggression, and focused instead on the Swift president's cavalier attitude to democratic union processes, which had created a deep division within the local.[4] Despite this censure from higher level union executives, Stan Solomonson publicly rained verbal abuse on Jack Hampson at a subsequent general membership meeting of the local.[5] There is no evidence that Solomonson was formally disciplined by any level of the union for his actions. Remarkably, he was re-elected president of the Swift local several times, which demonstrated Solomonson's continuing power and influence.

The 1949 assault incident reveals competing notions of trade union leadership operating within UPWA during the immediate postwar years. There was significant grassroots support for an aggressive, dictatorial, hyper-masculine style of union leadership. Yet this behaviour conflicted with democratic principles and the ideal of highly disciplined and responsible craft union masculinity cultivated at upper levels of the union. This chapter explores the ways in which notions of rough and respectable trade union masculinity were mobilized by male leaders at different levels of the union during the era of national pattern bargaining. These contrasting notions of masculine trade union leadership could have

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[3] Alex Goruk. 1 October 1949.
[4] Stephens, "Investigation Local 280."
[5] Hampson, "Alberta Staff Reports, Locals 233-422." 15 November 1949.

contradictory effects, often strengthening the bargaining position of workers yet also constraining democratic and egalitarian initiatives.

Gendering Union Leadership

American historian Ava Baron has noted that masculinity is a "central, albeit unstable and contested, feature of Labour politics," yet the historiography on trade union masculinities is still quite limited, particularly in Canada.[6] Early studies that examine union leadership in Canada's meatpacking industry under pattern bargaining were written well before gender was considered a useful category of analysis.[7] Studies that touch on male packinghouse leaders in Alberta's postwar labour movement have emphasized their efforts to establish respectability amidst communist allegations, but not in terms of historically specific notions of trade union masculinity.[8] The work of British labour historians, however, suggests that immigrant English and Scottish craft workers, and their sons, who took jobs in Edmonton packinghouses in the early twentieth century, brought with them well-developed traditions of respectable trade union masculinity that shaped the earliest attempts to unionize. Keith McClelland and others have shown how the craftsman's understanding of working-class respectability was quite distinct from bourgeois values in ways that helped lay the foundation for the development of trade unionism. These skilled men embraced a set of beliefs that made the "artisan" morally committed to defending his trade.[9] Neville Kirk has characterized this moral economy as a commitment to collective rather than individual self-help, a "fierce"

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[6] Baron, "Masculinity." 1. Guard, "Womanly Innocence; McInnis, "Hothead Troubles: 1960s-Era Wildcat Strikes in Canada; McCallum, "'Not a Sex Question?'."

[7] See Scott, "Gender: A Useful Category." Montague, "Trade Unionism"; Bain, "UFAW's Development"; Craig, "The Consequences of Provincial Jurisdiction".

[8] Caragata, *Alberta Labour*; Finkel, "The Cold War; ———, "Populism and Gender."

[9] Keith McClelland, "Masculinity and the Representative Artisan in Britain, 1850–80," in *Manful Assertions: Masculinities in Britain since 1800*, ed. Michael Roper and John Tosh (London: Routledge, 1991). 74.

pride in autonomy and independence, and a faith in fairness, just rewards and democratic practices.[10] It was these standards and values that also allowed the respectable working-class tradesman to distinguish himself from the unskilled labourer whose inadequate income and lack of control over the work process made him a wage "slave." One of the central tenets of male working-class respectability was the ability to be the family breadwinner, which meant supporting an unwaged wife in a home with some privacy.[11] Another was a strong sense of sexual propriety and sexual self discipline.[12]

Edmonton's earliest packinghouse organizers, who mobilized in the aftermath of World War One, were skilled tradesmen, butchers, and meat cutters, whose attempts to organize a craft union suggest that they were influenced by notions of trade union respectability. As an affiliate of the Canadian Trades and Labour Congress they likely also embraced aspects of Labourism, a strand of working-class politics in early twentieth century Canada distinctive for its commitment to democratic principles and craft unionism as vehicles for gradual electoral reform. Highly influenced by artisanal values of independence, equality, self respect, and fairness, Craig Heron has argued that Labourists believed in merit-based hierarchies, and "preferred self-help and self-improvement through individual and co-operative activity on a voluntary basis" to any comprehensive state system of income subsidy. He has demonstrated that these ideals marked Labourists as ideologically separate

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[10] Neville Kirk, *Change, Continuity and Class: Labour in British Society, 1850-1920* (Manchester, UK ; New York: Manchester University Press, 1998). 128.

[11] In her study of a working-class neighbourhood in nineteenth-century London, Janet McCallum found that "one of the deep divisions between respectable and the rough" was a home large enough to afford the family domestic privacy. McCalman, "Respectability." 114.

[12] Harrison, *Peaceable Kingdom*. 166-67.

from social democrats who were advocating professional, state-ordered social supports.[13] As a result of these historical influences craft unionists in early twentieth-century Canada urged their members to act responsibly and soberly in all aspects of their life and strove for a careful, highly disciplined approach to working-class organization.

In his study of radical manhood in the One Big Union during the same era, Todd McCallum makes explicit the centrality of gender to the identity of union men by distinguishing two notions of working-class masculinity: A predominantly rough masculinity projected by frontier labourers who endured harsh and dangerous working conditions, and the highly self-disciplined respectable masculinity of "craftsmen in crisis" who were feeling threatened by new technologies and scientific management. McCallum argues that the common commitment of these important groups of working-class men to patriarchal values, which resulted in "the almost complete absence of women in terms of political power within their unions," was key to their ability to unite around a radical agenda for collective action.[14] A rugged sense of equality among both groups of men, but particularly among the more respectable skilled workers, helped make democratic principles central to both notions of masculinity.

Depression and War

Gender dynamics during the 1937 strike at three Edmonton packinghouses reveal that strong patriarchal values also united local male union leaders. Early in the strike, when maintaining momentum was crucial, the men refused to allow forty women workers who participated in the initial sit-down strike to stay in the plant overnight with 150 male strikers,

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[13] Craig Heron, "Labourism and the Canadian Working Class," *Labour/Le Travail* 13, no. Spring (1984). 61.
[14] McCallum, "'Not a Sex Question?'." 32.

despite the fact that the women "protested volubly," according to the *Edmonton Journal.*[15] Lindsay McMaster's study of images of working women in the Canadian West during the early twentieth century helps to put this decision into context. McMaster reveals that Anglo-Canadian middle-class anxieties about preserving traditional gender norms and Anglo dominance were heightened by the West's later and more compressed rate of industrialization, which accelerated the transition to a modern, urban, industrialized society.[16] The protectiveness of male union leaders toward packing women reflects a sensitivity to this dominant discourse, but also a sense of sexual propriety that was consistent with contemporary notions of working-class respectability.[17] The demographics of the packing labour force likely heightened their paternalistic concerns about sexual propriety: There was a sharp contrast between the women workers, most of whom were young, unmarried, and Canadian-born, and men in the plant, who were more often married, older, and immigrants from the United Kingdom or Central or Eastern Europe.[18]

Feminist labour historians have demonstrated that these two dominant notions of trade union masculinity shifted within the changing contexts of Depression and war. American historian Elizabeth Faue has documented the movement toward a more narrowly defined workplace unionism by World War Two that was male-dominated, nationally centralized, and bureaucratic, and marginalized women in both the workplace and the

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[15] "Sit-Down Strikers Asked Leave Plant." *Edmonton Journal*, 6 April 1937.
[16] Lindsey McMaster, *Working Girls in the West: Representations of Wage-Earning Women* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2008).
[17] Harrison, *Peaceable Kingdom*. 163-167.
[18] In 1936 roughly forty per cent of male and seventy-three per cent of female workers were born in Canada. More than forty per cent of the men but only thirty-one per cent of the women identified as German, Polish or Ukrainian. Approximately fifty-five per cent of the men and seven per cent of the women were married. Dominion Bureau of Statistics Canada, *Census of the Prairie Provinces, 1936*, Table 7, Gainfully Occupied, 14 Years of Age and over, by Occupation, Conjugal Condition, and Sex; Tables 9 and 10, Gainfully Occupied, 14 Years of Age and over, by Occupation, Birthplace, Racial Origin and Sex.

community. The Minneapolis labour movement culture also projected a hyper-masculine image by drawing on "violent language [that] defined solidarity in masculine terms."[19] Scholarly studies of labour iconography show that in the twentieth century labour activists increasingly depicted "the worker" as a labourer rather than an artisan, to appeal to the growing numbers of labourers resulting from de-skilling, and to capitalize on their more militant image. In the context of the Great Depression labour solidarity was increasingly depicted as physically powerful, even brutish, to offer "visual reassurance" to working men whose identity and confidence had been shaken by persistent unemployment and low wages.[20]

There was a similar gender shift in the culture of Edmonton's packing union activism during the Depression and World War Two. Although the forces of capital and the state were too formidable in 1937 for packing organizers to triumph, the breadth and depth of community support during the Depression reveals a labour movement that was less exclusively male dominated than during the war and postwar eras that followed. The 1937 strikes at the Swift, Burns and Gainer packinghouses were locally controlled and involved many individuals who were outside the packinghouse. The strikes were actively supported by families of packing workers, particularly wives, a number of whom were arrested and charged with assault for their involvement in picket line scuffles when management used delivery trucks to bring in strike breakers. Two of these women were jailed for six weeks.[21] The strike also attracted broad community support. Packing workers received strong

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[19] Elizabeth Faue, *Community of Suffering and Struggle: Women, Men, and the Labor Movement in Minneapolis, 1915-1945* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991). 2, 19.
[20] *Ibid.* 97-98.
[21] "Pickets Posted at Week-End," *Edmonton Journal*, 12 April 1937; Fudge and Tucker, *Labour before the Law: The Regulation of Workers' Collective Action in Canada, 1900-1948*. 220

picketing support from unemployed single and married men in Edmonton, and from city alderwoman Margaret Crang.[22] Farmers were also sympathetic because company buyers found that they could not operate "as freely as usual in the Edmonton cattle market, probably influenced by labour troubles at packing plants."[23] The broader community's receptivity to labour organization was made apparent by similar strikes among those not traditionally associated with the labour movement: Four days after the first meatpacking strike began, eight "boy" bicycle messengers started a sit-down strike, and a day later seventy mainly female workers at two local laundries sat down on the job before vacating the plant to establish picket lines outside. The "hope that there would be a general strike among Edmonton workers" expressed by Victor Thompson, who was business agent for the laundry workers as well as the meatpacking workers, may have been overly optimistic, but it reinforces the impression of broad working-class mobilization and control.[24]

The rapid organization of a local craft union after the outbreak of war entrenched an exclusive form of male-dominated unionism during World War Two. UPWA's fierce struggle to supplant craft unionism in Edmonton packinghouses, however, opened up greater opportunities for women workers to attain leadership positions in the industrial union because of its need for their support. Compared to Local 78, where there is no evidence of women workers as organizers or in executive positions, women played a significant role in the struggle to establish UPWA. At Burns, the first UPWA local in the city, Ethel Wilson

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[22] A representative of the Single Unemployed Men's Protective Association in Edmonton promised to support every Edmonton strike with picketing, demonstrating the deep-rooted commitment to labour organizing felt by some community members. "New Walkout Marks City Industrial Strife; 15 Employees Quit Work at Snowflake Laundry; Messengers Win Claims," *Edmonton Journal*, 9 April 1937.
[23] "125 Employes in 2 City Firms out on Strike." *Edmonton Journal*, 8 April 1937.
[24] The eight workers at Champion Messenger Service were represented by the local labour hall. "New Walkout Marks City Industrial Strife," *Edmonton Journal*, 9 April 1937.

became vice president of her local during the war.[25] Women were charter members and held positions on the first executive of both the Canada Packers and Gainer locals.[26] Two women were also among the key union organizers and officials from the Canada Packers plant photographed shortly after the plant was finally certified in 1944. **[Figure 16]** Only at the Swift plant, which, ironically, had the largest number of women workers, is there no evidence that women were formally involved in chartering the union local. The influence of conservative craft union activists from Local 78, which was most strongly rooted in the Swift packinghouse, may have been a factor limiting opportunities for women workers in the Swift local.

Differences in the nature of equal pay grievances filed by each of the two competing packing unions during the war also suggest that activist union women could have more influence within the industrial union. Local 78 inadvertently made equal pay a major issue in Edmonton when it demanded a government investigation into the wide variance in wage rates for the same job performed in different local packinghouses. The result was a 1943 government ruling called the Cameron Report, which pegged women's wage rates at eighty per cent of a male wage when they performed the same job.[27] The newly minted UPWA local at Burns where Ethel Wilson was active reacted immediately by making equal pay for equal work a central demand in its first contract negotiation that fall, arguing that in some

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[25] Hampson, "Alberta Staff Reports, Locals 233-422." 11 August 1947.

[26] Canada Packers, as the second plant to organize under UPWA, had two Ukrainian women among its charter members, one with strong leftist sympathies, and Sadie Babichuk held the role of recording secretary on the first UPWA executive. The Gainer local had two women on its charter, Evelyn Isaacson and Mrs. Julius Schulz, and Mrs. V. Jones was treasurer on the first UPWA executive. Frank McCarty, "Organizer's Report of New Local Union, Canada Packers Local 243, 1944," (1944). Goruk, Interview. Lenglet, "Organizer's Report of New Local Union, Gainer Local 319."

[27] It meant women's rates were capped at fifty-two cents an hour to ensure an eleven to twelve-cent differential below the male rate if they replaced a male worker. Montague, "Trade Unionism in the Canadian Meat Packing Industry". 143

"male" jobs women workers were performing as efficiently as men.[28] When they failed to secure this demand, the Burns UPWA local filed a grievance with the Regional War Labour Board, which then ordered the company to pay women the same as men whenever they were placed on a "male" job. The company's successful appeal resulted in the National War Labour Board's ruling that women should be paid "in proportion to their efficiency."[29] What is important here, however, is that a month after the decision was announced Burns workers in Edmonton tried to piggy-back their equal pay cause onto the illegal 1945 strike at Canada Packers, threatening to walk off the job because none of the local packinghouses had complied yet with the month-old ruling.[30] Although the gambit was unsuccessful -- the union backed down -- the incident demonstrated a remarkable commitment to the issue of equal pay among Burns workers and their union leaders.

In comparison, an equal pay case filed by the craft union, Local 78 based in the Swift plant, a few months later than Burns was less radical and was not pursued as aggressively. The case was designed primarily to re-categorize jobs women performed during the war as male jobs, not to show that women were entitled to the same pay as men when they performed equally well in the job. Women workers at Swift received equal wages from a decision in the union's favour, but the case took eighteen months longer than the Burns case to resolve. Also, there is no record of job action threats, and the resolution supported by the union barred women from the jobs in contention. UPWA's aggressive pursuit of equal pay was not simply a recruitment strategy, since the 1945 job action threat occurred after UPWA

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[28] *Ibid.* 144
[29] "Pay by Efficiency to Women O.K.'D." As discussed in Chapter Six.
[30] "City Packing Plant Strike Not Settled, Equal Pay for Women May Cause New Issue," *Edmonton Journal*, 3 August 1945.

had been certified in Edmonton's three largest packinghouses. It seems likely that Ethel Wilson, and possibly other activist women on the executive of UPWA's Burns local, pressed the issue, encouraged by the international union's egalitarian rhetoric.[31] The lack of leadership opportunities for women workers in UPWA locals after the union had certified all four of Edmonton's packinghouses, however, suggests that male leaders in both unions shared traditional patriarchal values and highly gendered notions of trade union leadership.

UPWA's egalitarian rhetoric and inclusiveness in the context of fierce union rivalry also gave workers on the racial and ethnic margins of Edmonton society more leadership opportunities than they had in Local 78. Although during the war the workforce in Edmonton packinghouses was not racially divided as starkly as in the United States, there were significant ethnic tensions. The evidence suggests that leadership positions within the earliest Edmonton packing unions were held exclusively by highly skilled Anglo-Canadian workers, while the leadership of UPWA included many semi-skilled and unskilled workers who were ethnically and racially diverse. The egalitarian attitude and rhetoric of some UPWA organizers helped the union win support. In one anecdote John Lenglet, who organized the first UPWA local in Edmonton at the Burns plant, said that a Polish worker told him "how wonderful I was because I treated him the same as English-speaking workers...as far as I was concerned all people were equal."[32] Charter documents and fragmentary union records from the earliest years reveal that although the leadership of

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[31] Ethel Wilson was sufficiently involved by 1945 to attend UPWA's Western Regional Conference in February as an articulate and outspoken Burns delegate, and actively promoted the concept of equal pay as chair of the Women's Committee at UPWA's international convention in 1947. Grodeland, "Proceedings". "UPWA Proceedings, May 6-8, 1947". Jack Hampson, "Alberta Staff Reports, Locals 233-511," (Edmonton: LAC, CFAW fonds, MG 28 I-186, PWOC and UPWA series, Vol 24, 1951-55). General Report, 29 June 1951.

[32] Bain, "The United Packinghouse, Food and Allied Workers: Its Development, Structure, Collective Bargaining, and Future, with Particular Reference to Canada". 64-5, f.n.23

UPWA locals was dominated by those with Anglo or German names, roughly a third had East European names. The craftsmen who led Local 78 were united by their predominantly Anglo-Celtic heritage, which conveyed tremendous social status compared to first and second-generation non-Anglo immigrants, particularly East Europeans, who dominated less skilled packing positions.[33] Preserving the alignment of skill with ethnicity held the promise of sustaining an exclusive trade unionism that they hoped would allow them to resist the devaluation of their skills with increasing mechanization and the influx of large numbers of Eastern, Central, and South Europeans entering local packinghouses.

The intersection of ethnicity, gender and skill helped to forge such strong bonds in Edmonton that when one of their own abandoned the craft union it created a chasm in understanding that could not be breeched. Jack Hampson, who was one of Local 78's most respected leaders, endured harsh rejection for joining UPWA toward the end of the war and becoming the union's Alberta staff representative. Hampson's craft union background as the son of an immigrant English steelworker who took him into the steel mills on the Prairies when he turned sixteen, initially made him a strong advocate of the TLC-affiliated Butchers union. But Hampson said he was also influenced by socialists he encountered during the Depression when chronic bouts of unemployment forced him to ride freight trains across the country and work in government relief camps before he got a job at the new Canada Packers plant built in 1936. When disillusionment with Local 78 finally convinced Hampson to switch allegiance in 1945 and he accepted the position of Alberta staff representative for UPWA – a job he held for nearly thirty years – the most loyal craft unionists felt betrayed

[33] This ethnic divide was apparent in the third certification vote at Canada Packers, which was held on Good Friday -- an important holiday for Ukrainian workers. Twelve Ukrainian workers signed affidavits claiming they would have voted for UPWA had they been at work. Montague, "Trade Unionism". 149.

and became embittered. Hampson said one packing man told him: "'I'll never speak to you again Jack,' and he never did. He died hating me for that. And there were others."[34]

To distinguish their union from Local 78 and bolster support among Edmonton packing workers UPWA activists promoted a hyper-masculine image of the industrial union as more militant than craft unionists, who were more interested in "cooperating" with management then in pressing worker grievances.[35] Notions of ethnic difference intersected with class and gender in ways that likely enhanced the perceived difference between Anglo-Celtic craft unionists and the industrial union's less skilled East European leaders, who had been heavily stigmatized in Prairie society as less able to control their emotions than the socially dominant Anglos. During the campaign both unions drew selectively on both rough and respectable notions of trade union masculinity, but the intensity of the competition for worker allegiance helped foster the appeal of a particularly aggressive and dictatorial brand of trade union masculinity. One scholar described "the fight" as "among the most bitter in trade union history, every tactic known to labour union men being employed," including "eavesdropping" and "sabotage."[36] Staff reports reveal that union activists in both camps used verbal and physical intimidation to press their cause. At one Swift meeting held by Local 78, UPWA supporters who refused to leave after being ordered out, were threatened with physical ejection by "burly door guards."[37] During the same meeting 250 UPWA

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[34] Hampson, Interview Transcript.
[35] *Ibid.* John Tait Montague, "Trade Unionism in the Canadian Meat Packing Industry" (Thesis, Ph.D., University of Toronto, 1950). 99.
[36] Montague, "Trade Unionism". 148.
[37] Goruk, Interview Transcript.

supporters erupted into a "near riot" outside the union meeting when Local 78's president tried to exclude a UPWA nominee from the election process for chair of the Swift union.[38]

UPWA's Canadian leaders cultivated a similar image nationally through the series of national strikes and near strikes it conducted in the mid-1940s. The illegal national Canada Packers strike in 1945 was pivotal in shaping a highly militant and masculinist image of Canadian packinghouse workers within the media. The key issue was the union's right to remove a worker who refused to obey a brief union-ordered work stoppage in Toronto. The recalcitrant Toronto worker, who threatened a union official with a knife during the incident, fueled an image of packinghouse workers as dangerous because of the work they performed. Most importantly, the strike marked "the origin of a 'myth' that all packinghouse workers combine in a drive for any concession." John Tait Montague argues that this 'myth' of exceptional solidarity among Canadian packing workers, "became a powerful weapon in the drive for a master agreement."[39]

Yet UPWA leaders also strove to project an image of respectable trade union masculinity in particular historical moments. During the final stages of organizing the last big Edmonton packinghouse local UPWA leaders expressed ambivalence about their union's militant reputation. In November 1944 as their campaign in the Swift packinghouse was peaking, local UPWA organizer John Lenglet tried to prevent a walk-out instigated by UPWA executives of the Swift local over excessive overtime. Lenglet confided in his report to the national office: "I think we could of shut the plant down but I was afraid that this would hurt our case. A lot of people think we are to [sic] radical and if we walked out they

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[38] John Lenglet, "Canadian National Telegram," (Edmonton: LAC, CFAW fonds, MG 28 I-186, PWOC and UPWA series, Vol 7, 1944). 6 Oct. Hampson, Interview Transcript; Goruk, Interview Transcript.
[39] Montague, "Trade Unionism". 180.

would have a good talking point against us."[40] UPWA union leaders also adopted the language of cooperation in their organizing flyers, urging Local 78 to sit down with them and try to work together to serve the needs of local packing workers, an invitation that the craft unionists rebuffed. These incidents suggest that both unions recognized the social authority they could gain from conforming to the dominant masculine ideals of rationalism and control.

National Pattern Bargaining, 1947-1965

Notions of rough and respectable trade union masculinity were employed in distinctive ways within the new postwar framework for labour relations in Canada and the system of national pattern bargaining in the meatpacking industry. Feminist scholars have drawn attention to ways in which the postwar Canadian labour relations framework has been profoundly gendered. Anne Forrest's critique of the Postwar Compromise shows that it was designed to privilege the needs of male workers whose claim to family breadwinning was unavailable to women workers, who were still presumed to be supplemental earners as daughters, wives, and mothers.[41] One important change in the wake of postwar labour legislation that strengthened unions was the greater potential for unskilled unionized workers to command a respectable wage. Sanford Jacoby's exploration of the historical process by which "good jobs" were created in the United States by the mid-twentieth century, reveals that it was the large proportion of semi-skilled and unskilled workers in C.I.O. unions that

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[40] John Lenglet, (LAC, CFAW fonds, MG 28 I-186, accession 1984-0536, Box 44, Swift Correspondence, 1944). 11 November.

[41] Anne Forrest, ""Securing the Male Breadwinner: A Feminist Interpretation of Pc 1003"," in *Labour Gains, Labour Pains: Fifty Years of PC 1003*, ed. Cy; Phillips Gonick, Paul; Vorst , Jesse; (Winnipeg/Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 1995). For an in depth look at women's more limited claims in the American context see Alice Kessler-Harris, *In Pursuit of Equity: Women, Men, and the Quest for Economic Citizenship in 20th-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).

made these unions press for disproportionate increases in the lowest job rates to improve the standard of living for all union members to a respectable level.[42]

The values of respectable trade union masculinity were also central to the highly bureaucratic employment system that developed after World War Two. As Sanford Jacoby has explained, butchers in the Chicago meat packing industry, for example, devised detailed seniority-based systems of promotion at the turn of the century to curtail management favouritism. In the same way, the notion of job rights and fair treatment stemmed from the sense of entitlement tradesmen felt as "sober and trustworthy masters of the trade" who demonstrated "unselfish brotherhood" when they used highly disciplined job actions to pressure management to implement their ideas.[43] They viewed elaborate employment systems and procedures as vehicles for attaining the security, dignity, and status, accorded white-collar workers. Nevertheless, these trade union values of respectable masculinity were distinct from middle-class masculine values of rationalism, individualism, independence, and the freedom to maximize profits, which had underpinned the earlier "market-oriented employment system."[44]

In the new industrial unions of the postwar era elements of respectable trade union masculinity were conjoined with notions of rough masculinity in ways that bolstered labour's power. Gillian Creese's study of unionized B.C. telecommunications workers shows that the hyper-masculine image of less skilled workers was crucial to bargaining success within the postwar labour relations framework. Throughout the postwar decades the union's all-male

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[42] Jacoby, *Employing Bureaucracy*. 186
[43] *Ibid.* 20.
[44] Jacoby demonstrates that management only gave up a "market-oriented employment system" for bureaucratic processes to cope with the severe labour shortages during World War One, or in response to the U.S. government's New Deal labour legislation in the Depression. *Ibid.* 3.

blue-collar bargaining unit was able to achieve higher wage gains than white-collar men who were considered more skilled, but whose bargaining unit included women, and who eschewed the image of blue-collar militancy.[45] Mark Rosenfeld's study of running trades men demonstrates that even skilled workers could employ a notion of respectability that encompassed an aggressive toughness and directness that was markedly different from male middle-class gentility.[46]

Nevertheless, there were also important continuities between the values of respectable trade union masculinity and the manly modern. Despite his tendency to ignore the roots of respectable trade union masculinity dating back to the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Christopher Dummitt's gender analysis of how the union representing skilled male workers responded to a deadly bridge collapse in 1950s Vancouver provides insight into several commonalities between these constructions of masculinity. Dummitt demonstrates that in the inquiry that followed the bridge collapse ironworkers did not question the modernist project of industrialization that created the dangers to which they were subjected. Instead, priding themselves on their knowledge and judgement, they had rejected safety regulations externally imposed by government bureaucrats because they saw the dangers in their occupation as central to their manly identity. Dummitt attributes this particular emphasis on the riskiness of their work to their need to reassert male authority in the face of workplace advances women were making after the war. He also argues that the self-image ironworkers cultivated as "experts and heroes" was viewed by government officials and management as a "fascinating difference from the middle-class norm," which

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[45] Creese, *Contracting Masculinity*. 80. Joy Parr work provides another compelling example of this pattern. Parr, *Gender of Breadwinners*.
[46] Rosenfeld, "'It Was a Hard Life'."

allowed them to be more easily "othered." This construction of working-class masculinity helped to subordinate the knowledge of ironworkers to the "rational" arguments of state and business representatives, and, most importantly, precluded "a radical labour critique of workplace violence."[47] Their faith in male dominance also positioned them "alongside employers as breadwinners and as men, uniting employers and employees in their gendered identities."[48] Dummitt's analysis shows how adherence to the manly modern faith in the project of industrialization and patriarchal values helped subvert the safety and social authority of working-class men within the bureaucratic postwar labour relations system.

Dummitt's analysis also suggests that attitudes toward emotion provided some affinity between the notions of masculinity mobilized by ironworkers and middle-class business and government officials. Although not identical, the "reticent and emotionless demeanour" projected by ironworkers was not unlike the rational, emotionally contained image of the manly modern. As Dummitt explains, "the two joined at the point where stoicism and reason met."[49] In the American context, Stephen Norwood has argued that growing bureaucratization of the workplace by the post-World War Two era with increasing numbers of both middle-class and working-class men performing their job at close quarters in large impersonal corporations encouraged the trend toward masculine rationalism and emotional restraint. Norwood's study of American anti-unionism chronicles a shift from the celebration of a defiant, aggressive, and muscular middle-class masculinity in the early twentieth century to a new managerial emphasis on anger control in the workplace. After the violence of strikes in the 1930s and war years, Norwood explains that many workers in mass

[47] Dummitt, *The Manly Modern*. 74.
[48] *Ibid.* 67, 74.
[49] *Ibid.* 64.

production industries began to favour a workplace where individuals were required "to suppress their intense feelings in the interest of group harmony."[50] Stephen Meyer's exploration of the rough masculinity used by American auto workers to bolster their power within the constrained environment imposed by their union's no-strike pledge during World War Two, seems to suggest that following the war this behaviour was less necessary.[51] Another American study, however, suggests that rough behaviour remained an important vehicle for asserting male working-class power and control. Kevin Boyle demonstrates that rough behaviour was used by American auto workers to re-establish gender and racial hierarchies after a white woman and a black man shared a public kiss on the assembly line during a Christmas celebration in 1955. Boyle explains that unlike craftsmen, semi-skilled auto workers lacked institutional structures or work traditions that could allow them to assert significant control in the workplace. As a result they turned to the "'rough culture' of working-class camaraderie, the traditions not of the craftsman's lodge but of the local bar, the streetcorner and the neighborhood gang." The threat by these white male workers to beat the two workers who "transgressed" invoked this rough culture "at full force ... to establish order."[52] Stan Gray's personal reflections on how rough masculinity was deployed in a Canadian auto plant during the 1970s suggests that this behaviour was pervasive and persistent on both sides of the border in this male-dominated industry.[53]

Julie Guard's investigation of two ideologically opposed groups of trade union leaders in Canada following World War Two reveals how each drew on these notions of

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[50] Norwood, *Strikebreaking & Intimidation*. 228-229
[51] Meyer, "Rough Manhood."
[52] Boyle, "The Kiss." 503, 504, 520.
[53] Stan Gray, "Sharing the Shop Floor," in *Beyond Patriarchy: Essays by Men on Pleasure, Power, and Change*, ed. Michael Kaufman (Toronto: Oford University Press, 1987).

trade union masculinity in new ways to bolster their social claims within the context of the Postwar Compromise.[54] In the wake of 1940s labour legislation that gave organized labour unprecedented legitimacy and respectability, leaders within the Canadian Congress of Labour (CCL) promoted a professional style of union leadership that they claimed was calm, responsible, and "intelligent thinking." As Guard explains, "Such a man would demonstrate his courage by holding fast at the bargaining table, where he faced the employer man to man, rather than hiding weakly behind his striking workers." CCL leaders promoted the new labour identity by contrasting this image with a confrontational style of masculine leadership attributed to radicals like Communists. Guard says CCL leaders portrayed leftists as "irresponsible hotheads whose actions proved nothing but their lack of self-control and a desire for self-aggrandizement." She argues that fostering this gender dichotomy helped blur class differences, weakening the "appeal of a heroism predicated on the battle of class against class." At the same time, because both styles of union leadership were overtly masculine they rendered the workplace militancy of women workers invisible or, at worst, disreputable.[55] Both highly gendered union leadership styles also made it difficult for union members to imagine women in leadership positions.

These dichotomous understandings of trade union masculinity took on a particular character in Edmonton within the context of the meatpacking industry's national system of pattern bargaining. Some local male union leaders displayed ambivalence toward the modernist assumptions of efficiency and progress on which the new labour relations system

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[54] For more on the post-1945 framework for relations between capital and labour, termed the Postwar Compromise or Fordist Accord, see Wells, "Origins of Canada's Wagner Model; Gonick, Phillips, and Vorst, eds., *Labour Gains, Labour Pains : Fifty Years of PC 1003*.

[55] Guard, "Womanly Innocence.". 120-23.

was built. In comparison to Vancouver's skilled ironworkers, Edmonton packing leaders, most of whom were not skilled, remained somewhat skeptical about the notion of progress, at least in part because of the limited and uncertain returns labour was able to exact from "more efficient" technologies and processes, even under national pattern bargaining.[56] Local union leaders responded strategically to the manly modern emphasis on reason, professionalism, and control, at times employing a counter-hegemonic working-class masculinity that disparaged expertise and could feature physical intimidation and outbursts of angry profanity to assert worker power. By comparison, packing union leaders at the provincial, national, and international levels tended to emphasize organization, professionalism, and rational arguments backed by facts and figures, and were more likely to calculate risk and avoid confrontation.

Ethnicity may have heightened the difference between these competing notions of trade union masculinity. The stigma of violence and lack of control attached to East Europeans, particularly Ukrainians, who were well-represented in local leadership positions, contrasted starkly with the image of rationalism and control attached to Anglo-Canadians who predominated at the national and provincial levels.[57] Both notions of masculinity operating within the packing union leadership were united, however, by patriarchal values, particularly the powerful myth of the male breadwinner. The labour movement's new status and wage gains, which gave unskilled unionized men a degree of respectability previously

[56] Dummitt, *The Manly Modern*. 67.

[57] The two men who held the position of Canadian director of the union were Fred Dowling, an Irish-Canadian, and Romeo Mathieu, a French-Canadian, who succeeded him. John Lenglet, the national research director of the union and Norm Riches, the Western Region director, were quite likely Anglo-Canadian, and Jack Hampson was the son of an English immigrant. Although Ukrainian-Canadian Peter Uganecz succeeded Hampson, he did not stay in the position long. Norm Leclaire is of French-Canadian ancestry.

available only to highly skilled craftworkers, could unite trade union men with company officials in the acceptance of gender stereotypes that subordinated women and weakened class cohesion.

A number of events in the immediate postwar years demonstrate that local packing men continued to mobilize a heroic, confrontational style of trade union masculinity, even if it meant a union leader could be aggressive and high-handed. Right after the 1947 strike leaders of the Swift local used physical aggressiveness to stymie a 1948 arbitration hearing. The union was grieving management's decision to rehire three strikebreakers, demanding that they be fired, or at the very least fined $300 and expelled from the union. Local UPWA officials disrupted the meeting by jumping to their feet in anger when it was clear they had no voice in the hearing. In his report to the national union director, provincial staff representative Jack Hampson explained, "We refused to sit down and bedlam broke out and finally the thing was adjourned for three weeks."[58] Although the union lost the arbitration, the physical intimidation its union leaders displayed in the meeting was a form of rough masculinity used to assert male union power. Rank and file members used a similar tactic on the shop floor. Two of the strikebreakers remained on the job for twenty years, and one man, a calf-splitter on the beef kill, was subjected to harassment, name-calling, and death threats for many years by men who worked alongside him.[59] Co-workers were more successful at getting a woman strikebreaker out of the plant "pretty quickly" with treatment that was "nasty," according to former Canada Packers worker Ray Jamha.[60]

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[58] Hampson, "Alberta Staff Reports, Locals 233-422." Local 280, 18 December 1947.
[59] Westacott and Westacott, Interview.
[60] According to Roy Jamha, a former Canada Packers worker, a picture of the Swift woman who scabbed was posted on a union office wall for twenty years, even though she was forced out of the plant soon after the 1947 strike. Jamha, Interview Transcript.

In the Swift packinghouse rank and file loyalty to Stan Solomonson, who committed the two 1949 physical assaults detailed at the beginning of this chapter, helps to illustrate the respect Edmonton packing workers had for those who were able to stand up to the boss or to others who posed a threat to worker power. In an interview, former Swift worker and union activist George Kozak revealed that Stan Solomonson and his predecessor were the type of union president many workers respected:

> We had a president after that strike, Jim Sessford. He's the one who started the whole thing. You had a complaint, he'd drop his knives in the vestibule there and his apron down the steps, and he's in the superintendent's office. 'You so and so, what do you think you're doing?' Fix everything up. He was such a thorn in their side ... Then Solomonson came along, he was another one of us. Same thing. He'd cause them trouble.[61]

Here Kozak makes explicit the expectation among workers that a union president be able to confront management.

Evidence about the first union president at Canada Packers, Fred Romanchuk, reveals grassroots support for a confrontational leader in that packinghouse during the war. In an interview many years later Alex Goruk said that when he was elected chief steward at Canada Packers during the war, Romanchuk had lunch with him one day and explained that the function of the union was at some point to take over the plant by force.[62] When Romanchuk resigned from UPWA in 1944 because the union signed a national deal that, among other things, "shackled" workers by reducing their ability to "fight" with job action,

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[61] Kozak, Interview Transcript.
[62] Goruk, Interview Transcript.

many workers initially followed him to the rival union, Local 78.[63] In the interview during which Goruk related his anecdote about Romanchuk he distanced himself from the former president's alleged endorsement of violence. Numerous sources described Goruk as a highly effective union leader who was president of the Canada Packers local more often than any other person during the era of national pattern bargaining, but he also had a reputation as a forceful leader who could be autocratic and at times abrasive.[64]

Bringing a gendered lens to the opening scene in this study, which saw Ethel Wilson and the chief steward at Burns forced out as contenders for the union's national negotiating committee in 1947, reveals how a notion of rough trade union masculinity was mobilized by skilled workers to exert control in a union meeting. Bill Chrapko was a scale repairman and John (Scotty) Ferguson was a craftsman and Scottish immigrant who had participated in every organizing drive at the Burns plant since he started working there in 1915, which gave him considerable influence.[65] Their extraordinary efforts to take control of the local, manufacturing "unruly" behaviour in union meetings and using "intimidation" to marginalize the vice president and chief steward, likely stemmed from their craft union values and sensibility: They opposed the union's involvement in electoral politics and the

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[63] John Tait Montague explains that this loyalty evaporated when Canada Packers workers realized Romanchuk had been hired as a staff man by the rival union to undermine UPWA, and returned to the industrial union. Montague, "Trade Unionism". 151-52. CFAW Local 243, "President's Notes." Fred Romanchuk, "Why I Resigned as President of Local Union No. 243," (Edmonton: President's Notes on Plant Problems, UFCW Local 1118 Edmonton office, Canadian Food and Allied Workers, Local 243 records, 1944).

[64] Alex Goruk died some years ago and could not be interviewed, but this impression was conveyed off the record in a number of oral interviews, and in executive minutes for the union local from the 1970s. The fact that more than one person asked that the recorder be turned off before they would comment on Goruk's leadership suggests that criticism was muted by the perception that it would not be well received.

[65] "Retiring John (Scotty) Ferguson Honoured by Local 233," *Canadian Packinghouse Worker*, December. Hampson, "Alberta Staff Reports, Locals 233-422." General Report, 10 May 1949.

challenge to traditional gender norms posed by women workers and their growing demands for equal pay.

Despite being a former craft unionist, Jack Hampson clearly rejected the political orientation of Chrapko and Ferguson, but his reliance on female gender stereotypes indicates that he adhered to the same patriarchal attitudes.[66] Two years after the 1947 incident of intimidation, Jack Hampson dismissed Wilson's persistent criticism of Chrapko's leadership, which Hampson said perpetuated a division he felt was "dying out." In a staff report to the national office he explained, "while she has nothing specific against the present executive she feels that she was unjustly dealt with some two years ago, and being a woman I guess she finds it very difficult to forget."[67] It seems no coincidence that the following year Wilson made her first run for municipal office. Put together, this fragmentary evidence suggests that Ethel Wilson gave up labour activism and entered community politics because she felt shut out of influential union positions and her concerns about her local's bullying and undemocratic leaders were dismissed by the union's provincial staff representative. These events help make explicit the ways in which gender stereotypes limited the leadership aspirations of capable women in Edmonton's UPWA locals during the postwar years.

The results, however, were damaging for the union and the labour movement. By 1959 Ethel Wilson's shift to the Social Credit party was actively undermining her progressive influence within the local. Wilson was accused of perpetuating a long-standing division within the local by criticizing autocratic leaders who exploited their position, which helped

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[66] Jack Hampson, "Alberta Staff Reports, Locals 233-422," (LAC, CFAW fonds, MG 28 I-186, PWOC and UPWA series, Vol 24, 1947-50). Local 233, 11 Aug 1947

[67] Hampson, "Alberta Staff Reports, Locals 233-422." Local 233, 15 Nov 1947.

trigger an external investigation of the union's executive.[68] Yet as a Social Credit MLA Wilson influenced the Burns local against supporting any contribution to the new labour party that UPWA was helping to build, which became the New Democratic Party.[69] Although a petition against affiliation with the NDP that she helped instigate ultimately failed – the Burns local affiliated in February 1962 – Wilson had clearly abandoned the vision of a broader workers movement able to effect change for women that drew her to UPWA in its early years.[70]

The preference for confrontational male union leaders was also evident at the Gainer local where in 1948 fellow executive officers forced president Don Butler to resign because his relationship with management was too cooperative and self-serving. According to staff representative Jack Hampson, "He had been in the habit of making deals with the Superintendent himself which was not always in the interest of the membership."[71] In comparison, Cliff Cummings was re-elected president of the Gainer local many times during the 1950s and 60s, despite using methods that were self-serving and also at times autocratic and intimidating. Cummings used his position to secure delegate status at conferences where he spent extravagantly at the small local's expense. In 1961 one of the main objections to his leadership centred on Cummings' dictatorial methods. His leadership was challenged in 1955 by two experienced and progressive unionists, Dave Graham and John Zurawell, who

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[68] Wilson's concern about local president John Merschitz's autocratic method of appointing conference delegates and running meetings, and his refusal to account for expenses and lost time incurred on union work appear to have been justified because, according to Jack Hampson, the local was "financially broke" and divided during his tenure. Hampson, "Alberta Staff Reports, Local 233." 16 August 1959; 17 July 1960. Alistair Stewart. 16 September 1959 (LAC, CFAW fonds, MG 28 I-186, accession 1984-0536, Box 20, Burns, 1955-1975).

[69] *Ibid.* 12 March 1961; 9 April 1961.

[70] *Ibid.* 26 March 1962.

[71] ———, "Alberta Staff Reports, Locals 233-422." Local 319, 13 September 1948.

strongly opposed Cummings' use of ultimatums to elicit support for dues increases, particularly when it was clear that the president had "charged more lost time for convention attendance than any other delegate from the Edmonton area."[72] In 1961 Zurawell ran against Cliff Cummings and complained to the national union office that Cummings took unfair advantages in the election campaign and accused his opponent of being a Communist, to discredit him.[73] These allegations did little to undermine support for Cummings, who was re-elected numerous times.

The election of domineering, indeed sometimes abusive men, represents an important continuity within the leadership of Edmonton packing locals. External investigations of three Edmonton packing locals between 1949 and 1961 highlight a contradictory attitude toward democratic processes held by the international and national union figures sent to the city to resolve local leadership crises. The investigations looked into Stan Solomonson's arbitrary reduction of union dues to UPWA's city-wide council in 1949, the deep factionalism that erupted in the Burns local over President John Merschitz's wasteful spending in 1959, and allegations that Gainer local president Cliff Cummings spent extravagantly and did not conduct a fair election campaign in 1961. UPWA International Vice President A.T. Stephens, who investigated the first incident, was primarily concerned about "Solomonson's dictatorial methods," which had caused one of the local's most active executive members to resign.[74] Alistair Stewart, the auditor appointed by the national office to conduct the other

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[72] Dave Graham, was a former sub-district secretary for the United Mine Workers of America, and John Zurawell, was a former union representative for the International Woodworkers of America. ———, "Alberta Staff Reports, Locals 233-511." Local 319, 2 September 1955.

[73] Martin Brennan and John Zurawell, (LAC, CFAW fonds, MG 28 I-186, accession 1984-0536, Box 20, Gainers 1954-1975, c. 1961).

[74] Interestingly, this investigation was requested by Stan Solomonson, who saw it as a vehicle for vindicating his behaviour, which further affirms his reputation as boldly assertive. Stephens, "Investigation

two investigations, also emphasized the need to follow democratic processes in his report to the membership of the Burns and Gainer locals. After convincing Burns president John Merschitz to step aside, Stewart had to intervene to prevent the rival faction from arbitrarily appointing one of their own as the new president, which would have prevented the democratically-elected vice president from taking over. In his 1961 report on the Gainer local, Stewart described Cliff Cummings as "forceful" because he tried to challenge the auditor's authority. Stewart determined that there was extravagance and inequitable access to union funds but no union rules had been broken because all expenses were approved by the membership.

In each case union leaders from upper levels of the union chose not to challenge the aggressive tactics used by local leaders. When Jack Hampson was pilloried so publicly by Stan Solomonson after the 1949 assault incident he decided to avoid attending general membership meetings of the Swift local. Hampson defended his decision by explaining to the national director of the union that "Solomonson is doing a good job in the handling of grievances and the looking after the contract, and as long as this is done I suppose we have not too much to complain about."[75] Similarly, there is little evidence of Alex Goruk's abrasive and high-handed leadership style in Jack Hampson's staff reports, likely because Hampson valued Goruk's commitment to the union and his effectiveness in dealing with management. Alistair Stewart endorsed Cummings' re-election in the Gainer local's controversial 1961 executive elections, even though critics within the union felt that candidate John Zurawell was not given an equal opportunity to speak at a meeting

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Local 280." 19 October 1950 (LAC, CFAW fonds, MG 28 I-186, PWOC and UPWA series, Vol 48, Jack Hampson Correspondence, 1944-59).

[75] Hampson, "Alberta Staff Reports, Locals 233-422." Local 280, 15 November 1949.

immediately before the election, and that the election itself was held in cramped quarters, which made it impossible to ensure secret balloting.[76] Stewart noted that, despite his shortcomings, Cummings "is a much tougher individual than is Zurawell ...It is possible that if Zurawell were running things the company might ride rough shod over him. I am sure they don't with Cummings."[77]

The union's handling of these internal conflicts, which threatened the cohesiveness of Edmonton locals, reveals the careful jurisdictional line international and national executives tried to walk. In such cases the national office could have appointed an administrator for the local, if it determined that members of the local were not able to manage their own affairs in compliance with the principles of the union's constitution.[78] Scholarly studies of the meatpacking industry suggest that UPWA's international executive used its disciplinary powers judiciously to avoid curbing the solidarity and militancy encouraged by considerable local autonomy.[79] In his assessment of UPWA's autonomy and democratic process in Canada, George Sayers Bain found that large locals had considerable autonomy in their day-to-day affairs and the staff representative only intervened at the invitation of the membership."[80] This suggests that as the provincial staff representative Jack Hampson would have had influence, but no real power to discipline members perceived to have committed an offense. Bain also said UPWA had a difficult and costly formal disciplinary process, which

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[76] D.J. Butler, (LAC, CFAW fonds, MG 28 I-186, accession 1984-0536, Box 20, 319 Gainers 1954-1975, c.1961).
[77] Alistair Stewart, (LAC, CFAW fonds, MG 28 I-186, accession 1984-0536, Box 20, 319 Gainers 1954-1975, 1961). 4, 6 June 1961.
[78] Fred Dowling, (LAC, CFAW fonds, MG 28 I-186, accession 1984-0536, Box 20, Burns, 1955-1975, 1959). 3 September.
[79] Roger Horowitz and Dennis Deslippe examine the internal tensions created by the international union's effort to sustain both democratic grass roots control and social unionism in the American context. Deslippe, *Rights Not Roses*; Horowitz, *Negro and White*; Wilson, *Struggling with Iowa's Pride*. 77.
[80] Bain, "Ufaw's Development". 103

helps explain why he found that "very few charges have been made and even fewer expulsions have resulted."[81]

Upper level union leaders also valued aggressiveness in local leaders because this quality was more likely to protect union power against government intimidation. In the late 1940s and early 1950s the Trades and Labour Council's provincial organization, Alberta Federation of Labour (AFL), was notorious for its failure to defend trade union principles in its relations with the provincial government.[82] In one 1950s incident related by Roy Jamha many years later, Alberta Labour Minister Kenneth Pugh convinced the AFL's Resolutions Committee to abandon one of its resolutions "and there was damned near a revolution on the floor...Pugh wrote the Labour Act, let's face it, and he was their man to protect it and he did." Jamha said "naïve people in the plants" compromised union power: "At that time we didn't have very many people who could stand up to somebody as strong as him."[83]

At upper levels of the union, however, the image of trade union masculinity that predominated was non-confrontational, professional, and more emotionally restrained. The union's Alberta staff representative, Jack Hampson, seemed to exemplify this. It was evident in his handling of Stan Solomonson's physical and verbal abuse, but also in the way he responded to other forms of aggression within the labour movement. In 1949 Hampson was pressured by CCL leaders to run against popular Edmonton trade unionist Jan Lakeman in the election for president of Alberta's industrial federation, to force Lakeman out because he was a Communist. In a 1978 interview Hampson emphasized his reluctance to run because of his tremendous respect for Lakeman: "He was not only my friend but I considered him to be one

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[81] *Ibid.* 106.
[82] Caragata, *Alberta Labour.* 140.
[83] Jamha, Interview Transcript.

of the best trade unionists in the town, more knowledgeable than any of them. I couldn't do a thing like that."[84] But Hampson felt forced to comply when his wife was "dragged out of the car one night" in Edmonton by CCL men, after which he finally agreed to run for president and defeated Lakeman. The labour movement's strong-arm tactic seemed to shape Hampson's approach as a union leader: "Well, I didn't realize that the labour movement could apply as much pressure, that was my first experience of starting to buck the establishment and I soon learned I couldn't do it."[85] His non-confrontational and emotionally contained style of masculine leadership brought him much success in upper levels of UPWA and the provincial labour movement.

The aggressive image and tactics of local trade union leaders strengthened the bargaining position of workers in a number of pivotal moments, which helped workers achieve a significant voice and substantial contract gains. But within the union locals and the larger union and labour movement, an intimidating and dictatorial leader tended to undermine the democratic processes that were so central to the union's principles. This kind of leader often prevented workers from expressing alternative views. Stan Solomonson, for example, limited the expression of alternative voices within the Swift local that articulated a larger role befitting its size and potential influence in the local packing community. At Gainer's the efforts of a progressive, motivated, and enterprising unionist like John Zurawell were stymied by the behaviour of President Cliff Cummings, who at one union meeting "called Zurawell a liar from the chair."[86] Zurawell was a former board member of the United Mine Workers of America who became heavily involved in political activism within UPWA

[84] Hampson, Interview Transcript.
[85] *Ibid.*
[86] Stewart. 4, 6 June 1961.

during the 1950s.[87] While on the executive of Edmonton Labor Council he helped pressure the city to support bylaws that gave workers time to shop in the evening and increased the city's relief allowance.[88] Yet by 1960 he had stopped coming to union meetings.[89]

The rough masculine culture within a union hall and shop floor that prized aggression made it especially difficult for women to gain access to union positions.[90] Packing women who aspired to leadership positions had to negotiate dominant gender norms that equated strength, aggressiveness, and rationality with masculinity, and weakness, passivity, and irrationality with femininity. Assertive women were easily labeled "tough," which compromised their feminine respectability. In his description of Canada Packers women who organized a sit-down strike in their dressing room during World War Two, Jack Hampson explained, "we had some pretty rough girls too who didn't mind doing what they thought was right."[91] Whether he was judging them negatively or expressing respect for their assertiveness, his use of the term "rough girls" had negative connotations that "othered" the women workers when it was used by an Anglo-Canadian man like Hampson in a white-collar union job. Hampson's language also had gendered connotations when he described a similar level of resistance among Communist workers in the Pickle Cellar at Canada Packers who rejected a wage deal struck between the union and the company during the war.[92] In this case he did not mention whether they were men or women, but in decrying them as "bloody

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[87] Hampson, "Alberta Staff Reports, Locals 243-363 ". Local 319, 22 January 1956.
[88] Robert Atkin, (Edmonton: EMA, RG11 Class 15, File 153, Edmonton Labour Council, 1955). 12 December. ———, (Edmonton: EMA, RG11 Class 190, File 78, Edmonton Labour Council, civic relief and welfare, 1957). 25 September 1957.
[89] Stewart. 4, 6 June.
[90] Deborah Fink has demonstrated that in American meatpacking plants women who became involved in their union were often the target of vicious gossip. Fink, "What Kind of Woman." 101.
[91] Hampson, Interview Transcript.
[92] As discussed in Chapter Four.

Communists" for their intransigence, which forced the company to shut down the kill line, Hampson drew on qualities commonly seen as feminine -- being irrational and unreasonable -- to denigrate their confrontational behaviour.[93]

Paradoxically, despite rank and file pressure for a rough masculine style of trade union leadership supported at higher levels of the union, the logic behind wage increases for management and the structure of negotiations within the system of national pattern bargaining helped to foster an unprecedented degree of local cooperation between local union leaders and management figures. One former Canada Packers unionist explained in an interview that the company's policy of tying the annual wage increase for foremen and supervisors to that of unionized workers created a degree of affinity between the two local groups: "a lot of times when we were negotiating with them they told us, 'Look, we have to follow the non-bargaining-unit group. We hope that you get it, in a way, but we have to fight this in the best way we can because, you know our position.' And they were in a heck of a position to tell you the truth."[94] This observation was echoed by a former Swift worker who said holding negotiations many miles away helped foster "pretty good" relations between workers and management, even when there was a labour dispute.

> ... the supervisors are well aware that whatever brings on the strike is not their doing. It's because our negotiating people who negotiate contracts, they go to the head office back east – they're the ones that decide how a collective agreement is going to be settled and what is going to be the additional benefits etc.[95]

[93] Hampson, Interview Transcript.
[94] *Frank and *Winnifred, Interview.
[95] Bill P., Interview.

This context helps explain why local union leaders at Canada Packers took such a cooperative approach with management that in 1952 they were confronted by their own membership. As we saw in Chapter Four, workers refused to work a stint of overtime union leaders had promised to management until a backlog of grievances had been dealt with. A report on the incident to the national union office suggests that local union leaders felt they were expected by their own national leadership to find ways of cooperating with local management to maintain production. They emphasized their "almost spotless record" for agreeing to overtime work, and gave themselves most of the credit for maintaining "harmonious" relations with management since the union's certification in 1944.[96] Reporting on two wildcat walk-outs by workers in the Pork-Cutting room at Burns in the same year, Jack Hampson revealed his frustration, not with management, but with the men for not grasping the logic of complying with overtime that had been agreed to by local union leaders: "We have tried to talk to these people, pointing out that our contract does hold us morally responsible to work some overtime... However, none of this has been successful."[97]

The potential for mutual understandings to develop between local union leaders and managers was also enhanced by the men's shared Depression and wartime experience. After the war many managers at the local and national level had less than a high school education and had worked their way up through the packinghouse. Tommy Dane, who rose from foreman of the malodorous Pickle Cellar at Edmonton's Swift plant to become the superintendent and then national Industrial Relations Director for Swift Canadian by 1964, was exceptionally well-liked by workers and other managers alike. In an interview former

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[96] Executive, "Grievance Re: Overtime Refusal by Workers." 10 May. 1952.
[97] Hampson, "Alberta Staff Reports, Locals 233-511." Local 233, 30 May 1952.

Swift worker and union leader George Kozak spoke fondly of the time when Dane was superintendent and often "visited" with workers in the plant: "He'd come talk to me as if we were old buddies."[98] In the same way, the common experience of serving overseas during the war created a bond between some local management figures and unionized packing workers.[99]

A common adherence to patriarchal values also fostered cross-class alignment in local packinghouses. The renewed efforts of government, business, and unions to reinscribe patriarchal gender norms after the humiliation of male unemployment during the Depression and and low wages in the war years encouraged informal agreement between Edmonton union leaders and managers about the need to subordinate women in the workplace. As we saw in Chapter Six, women workers, who comprised twenty per cent of the local packing workforce, were forced to struggle against a company marriage bar through most of the 1950s and to endure gendered seniority lists until the 1970s, even though, according to correspondence with the national union office, UPWA clearly opposed these policies.

Correspondence between the chief steward at Canada Packers and national union officials provides further evidence that local unionists and management worked out a less confrontational relationship. In 1961 Harold Steele, the chief steward at Canada Packers in Edmonton, confided in a letter to the national union office that all local management agreed with him that the job rate on a new piece of equipment was too low. Steele cautioned, however, that the local personnel manager "was leery of me quoting him or his opinions,

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[98] Kozak, Interview Transcript.

[99] Two men that I interviewed -- a white-collar worker and a tradesman -- actually met while serving in the same Battalion in Europe then encountered each other in an Edmonton packinghouse after the war. In separate interviews the two men expressed respect for each other, but the tradesman noted the significant class divide in the plant, even though the white-collar worker earned less than the tradesman for many years.

which could lead to criticism for him from his Toronto office people. But, the fact is that he whole-heartedly agrees with my recommendations."[100]

Things changed quickly in the 1960s, however, as the head offices of packing companies increasingly hired mainly young university graduates with no packinghouse experience into management positions, which reduced the common ground between workers and management.[101] In 1963 the local union president at Canada Packers, Nick Romanko, reported to his national union office that, "different people now represent management here." Romanko said the new management refused to honor a long-standing "mutual agreement" with the local union that allowed workers facing layoff who were on compensation or sick pay to continue receiving their benefits until they were well again or the benefits expired.[102] By 1965 local union president Alex Goruk reported to the national union office that management's "cocky attitude" toward grievances lately had "crept into" the Employee Mutual Benefit Society's governing board, where non-union members were trying to dominate the board and to control cheque-signing.[103]

The escalation of class tensions in the early 1960s over management arbitrariness and intimidation also put more pressure on internal union relationships, bringing into sharp relief competing notions of masculine trade union leadership. In 1963 Chief Steward Harold Steele at Canada Packers determinedly and passionately pursued a grievance by a worker who was

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[100] Harold Steele, (LAC, CFAW fonds, MG 28 I-186, PWOC and UPWA series, Vol. 22, Canada Packers Grievances, 1961). 9 February.

[101] One senior executive explained to me that it was difficult to hire university graduates into low-level management positions because the shop floor environment was so unappealing. To get around this he would often hire them into a personnel position first.

[102] Nick Romanko, (LAC, CFAW fonds, MG 28 I-186, accession 1984-0536, Box 11, Canada Packers, Current, 1963). 21 February.

[103] Alex Goruk, "Report on Local Relations with Management." (LAC, CFAW fonds, MG 28 I-186, accession 1984-0536, Box 11, Canada Packers , 1965) 23 February.

suspended for not following the orders of his foreman, indicating a strong spirit of local union resistance to management control. In this case Malcolm J. was harassed for reporting a non-union clerk in his department who was repeatedly put on production work, which prevented laid off employees from being recalled. The clerk also pushed the pace of work, "disrupting the proper flow." After making derogatory remarks about Malcolm and saying he was out to give him a hard time, the foreman schemed to have Malcolm put on the heavy work of humping beef. When Malcolm found a way to avoid this work the foreman angrily had him suspended. Steele saw the incident as a clear case of harassment encouraged by the new local personnel manager W.L. Connelly:

> These kind of cases, suspension, are Connelly's baby here. He has instigated plenty of them along the lines of complete company control and direction, and if any employee, regardless of provocation, even slightly disobeys or does not jump at every order he is suspended.[104]

In his first letter to John Lenglet in the union's national office, the chief steward said he hand-wrote the letter "in a hurry" to get it in the mail quickly. He also used terms like "extreme difficulty" and "serious problems" to capture his sense of the gravity of the case, adding that there were another four "deadlocked" grievances like it in the Edmonton packinghouse. Steele declared that the situation was "serious enough to warrant your presence here," claiming, "It is a long, long time since you have been here, nor have we

[104] Harold Steele, "Report on Relations with Personnel Manager," (LAC, CFAW fonds, MG 28 I-186, accession 1984-0536, Box 11, Canada Packers Grievances, 1963).

bothered you much up till now."[105]

Harold Steele's impassioned plea for head office support contrasts starkly with John Lenglet's understated response to the Edmonton grievance. A week later Lenglet wrote Steele, saying, "I note that you are having some difficulty with Canada Packers and I might say you are not the only one," citing a large number of grievances, reprimands and suspensions caused by a job action in Montreal.[106] More than two months later, after a meeting with Bob Joyce, the industrial relations director for Canada Packers, Lenglet decided that it would be too difficult to argue such a case because, "The company takes one position and the union another. It becomes a question of facts," which could not be established without an arbitration board listening to sworn evidence.[107] This possibility, he said, had been ruled out because of timing stipulations in the contract.

John Lenglet's brief, dispassionate, and reasoned response is more characteristic of middle-class ideals of professionalism than the spirited militancy that was typical among local union leaders. The pressures of fielding requests for grievance support from union locals all over the country likely compromised the ability of national union leaders to empathize with local leaders. Growing social distance may also have been a factor. Lenglet's professional development as a national official since his early days as a union organizer in Edmonton during the war, and his acculturation to corporate boardrooms likely intensified the geographic distance of 3,000 miles between Edmonton and Toronto. In an interview Bob Joyce, a management figure at Canada Packers who worked regularly with

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[105] *Ibid.*
[106] In Montreal there were 82 grievances, 54 reprimands and 28 suspensions because of workplace slow-downs. John Lenglet, (LAC, CFAW fonds, MG 28 I-186, accession 1984-0536, Box 11, Canada Packers, Current, 1 May, 1963).
[107] *Ibid.*

Lenglet in Toronto, described him as "a terrific guy, a real straight shooter. I had a lot of respect for him. We had a terrific relationship."[108] Lenglet's restrained response did little to dampen Steele's dogged activism -- a final letter demonstrated his persistence -- and there is no evidence that the chief steward felt angry or lost confidence in the national office at this point, even though the union appeared to abandon the grievance.

The near-strike triggered by mandatory over time at the Gainer plant in 1965 further demonstrates contrasting notions of masculinity within the union leadership. During the lengthy dispute Jack Hampson was critical of the local's president, Cliff Cummings, for refusing to find creative ways to compromise over the five men who were fired for refusing overtime. Jack Hampson told national union director Fred Dowling, "He is not about to accept any advice from us, which includes your office."[109] When the local was on the brink of striking Hampson described Cummings as unreasonably and irresponsibly confrontational in a letter to his union superiors.[110] Nevertheless, Cummings' risky strike plan won strong support from the membership who voted 233 to 30 in favour of rejecting the conciliation report that reinstated the dismissed workers without restoring their seniority or wages. A short time later in the local's executive elections Cummings soundly defeated a competitor who campaigned on a platform to reach an agreement in thirty days without a strike. Instead, Gainer workers supported Cummings and voted strongly in favour of striking over the issue of voluntary overtime.[111]

In comparison Jack Hampson relied on discretion, pragmatic reasoning, and

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[108] Joyce, Interview.
[109] Hampson, "Alberta Staff Reports, Locals 243-1145." Local 319, 19 February 1965.
[110] _____, " ".
[111] _____, "Alberta Staff Reports, Locals 243-1145." Local 319, 5 February 1965

compromise. Hampson confided to national officials that for "a good number of years" he had been withholding damaging information about Cummings, but now that the local was "in very grave danger," he said, "I am not prepared to cover up for Cliff any further, and I would certainly hope that both of you feel the same way."[112] This last sentence suggests that upper level union leaders tolerated an aggressive and autocratic leader like Cummings for strategic reasons, but did not in principle endorse his style of trade union leadership. Hampson tried reasoning with Cummings to get him to compromise by accepting recent overtime provisions in the Canada Packers contract that Hampson felt could be made strong with militant leadership, to no avail.[113] As Hampson explained to upper level union officials, "I have made several suggestions to Cummings as to how this thing might be cleared up, all of them involving the Union backing down. He won't hear of it."[114]

In her gender analysis of meatpacking grievances during the same period, Joan Sangster identifies a similar contrast between union officials at the local level, who often pressed a grievance resolutely, and those in the national office. One case involving a woman worker who took a washroom break without waiting for a relief person clearly aligned male union leaders at the national level with management. As Sangster explained, "Two men sitting in Toronto head offices able to go to the washroom when they wanted ... exchanged letters about the grievance."[115] Her argument that national union officials sometimes portrayed male workers "degradingly" as "'naughty, disgruntled schoolboys ... needing paternal forgiveness if they were rash in their actions," reinforces the idea that hierarchical

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[112] ———, " ". 6 February 1964.
[113] *Ibid.* 8 September 1964.
[114] *Ibid.* 6 February 1964.
[115] Sangster, "Dscipline and Grieve." 156.

notions of masculinity operated at national and local levels of the union.[116] Perhaps most compellingly, Sangster concludes that the language of those on grievance panels and arbitration boards was a "distanced, cut-and-dried one of precedent, industrial efficiency, and contract legalize" that contrasted starkly with the "plain" "direct" language used by workers and, I would suggest, more often by local union leaders. Sangster argues convincingly that these "two different dialects" often made it nearly impossible to resolve workplace tensions.[117] A gendered lens reveals that packing trade unionists drew on competing notions of masculinity to assert their social authority, for reasons related to their place within an ostensibly non-hierarchical union structure. By the 1960s and 70s these gender differences were affecting class solidarity and militancy.

Trade Union Masculinities on the Public Stage, 1966-1979

To date gender has not been a major category of analysis in studies that have examined the Canadian strike waves in the 1960s and 70s. Bryan Palmer's analysis of Canadian wildcat strikes in the 1960s documents their gender demographics and emphasizes the ways in which the "modern" postwar legislative framework for relations between labour and capital made trade unions "more bureaucratized and less openly democratic."[118] In comparison, Peter McInnis more directly acknowledge the role of gender in the 1960s wildcat strikes by explaining that "many youthful dissidents were male" and used "highly gendered language" that gave "an overtly masculine ethos of physical confrontation to these job actions and an implicit (and often explicit) sexism to this strategy."[119] Neither study,

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[116] *Ibid.* 157.
[117] *Ibid.* 196.
[118] Palmer, *Canada's 1960s*. 214-216.
[119] McInnis, "Hothead Troubles: 1960s-Era Wildcat Strikes in Canada." 265-66.

however, explore ways in which diverse notions of masculinity were mobilized to enhance the power of male leaders at local and national levels of the union. Joan Sangster's examination of the 1965 Tilco strike involving a female-dominated workforce makes more explicit the way a highly gendered image of union men affected the women workers and the labour movement more generally. Sangster demonstrates that the involvement of male labour movement leaders, because of the repercussions for labour from the way a court injunction was used, made the Tilco strike go from "being a just struggle of women against their employer to heroic men sent to jail for their principles."[120] Her analysis shows us that in the context of profound 1960s gender conservatism a hyper-masculine image of the labour movement rendered women workers and their demands nearly invisible on the public stage. The gender dynamics also made it easier for management and government to construct Big Labour as "too demanding, powerful, and increasingly out of control."[121]

Masculinity had been central to the militant image of packinghouse workers since the labour disputes of the 1940s, and it was sustained locally and nationally during the 1966 Canada Packers strike by the exclusively male faces of union leaders and by their combative tone. In the union's national newsletter, president of the Canada Packers local in Edmonton, Alex Goruk, described younger workers who had not experienced a packing strike before as "a new breed working, planning and fighting side by side with many of the old veterans."[122] Gendered strike pay and picketing rules subordinated women and rendered them nearly

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[120] Joan Sangster, "'We No Longer Respect the Law': The Tilco Strike, Labour Injunctions, and the State," *Labour/Le Travail* 53 (Spring)(2004). 48, 72.
[121] *Ibid.* 72.
[122] Goruk, "'Like Old Times'." *The Canadian Packinghouse Worker*, August 1966.

invisible in strike records.[123] The only females noted in *Edmonton Journal* and union newsletter coverage of the Edmonton strike were a woman from the Young New Democratic Party pictured picketing with workers (image unavailable), and the four young daughters of a Swift worker who were under the age of twelve, which helped reinforce the image of packing workers as male family breadwinners.[124] **[Figure 17]** Local newspaper coverage of the strike consistently referred to workers in gender-neutral terms or described them as "men."

The hyper-masculine image of male packing workers, which could be highly effective at the bargaining table, made the union vulnerable to allegations of violent and irresponsible behaviour. Although there were no strikebreakers in the 1966 Canada Packers strike because management had shut down all its plants across the country, the local newspaper chose to highlight the twenty-four-hour police foot patrol on the picket line each day in its news coverage. The newspaper gave no voice to ordinary workers or their union leaders, instead interviewing the police inspector, who emphasized that officers selected for the job were "steady, discreet, and capable of handling the situation best" to prevent a "disturbance" and avoid provoking "trouble" with "an overwhelming display of force."[125]

The local labour movement strove to counter this image of packing workers as dangerous by emphasizing workers' respectability in conducting a legal strike and decrying the excessive police watch. In a letter to city council, Edmonton and District Labor Council

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[123] Strike pay rules varied across the country. In some cities married women received less than married men regardless of whether their husband worked. In Montreal the food committee specified that "girls" did not perform picket duty but worked in the canteen. It is unclear whether the Edmonton plant followed these rules, but quite likely. "National Strike Meeting-Regional Summaries," (LAC, CFAW fonds, MG 28 I-186, PWOC and UPWA series, Vol 13, Collective Agreements and Working Papers - Canada Packers).
[124] Goruk, "'Like Old Times'." Interestingly, the images provided to the newsletter by the Quebec wing of the union featured women picketers front and centre, although they are not identified as workers and could be wives who are not workers.
[125] Art Robinson, "Police Watch on Picket Line Touchy Chore: Constable Spends Entire Shift Walking around Picket Area," *Edmonton Journal*, 12 August 1966.

formally complained that the current police watch implied that packinghouse workers on strike "are irresponsible and likely to cause mischief unless supervised by police." The Council called for a complete withdrawal of the police watch.[126] UPWA's own directive to workers across the country discouraging drinking, gambling, and violence on the picket line, implicitly acknowledged the public relations dangers posed by a hyper-masculine image of male packing trade unionism during a strike.[127] Those trying to promote a respectable image seemed to be tapping into dominant notions of white middle-class manly self-control, reason, and order, to distance the union from behaviour that could discredit packing workers.

When labour relations at the Canada Packers plant deteriorated in the aftermath of the strike, local union leaders again drew on the qualities of respectable trade unionism to bolster their social authority within their own union. In a 1967 letter to the union's national office, president of the Canada Packers local, Alex Goruk, complained that, in a significant departure from past behavior, the superintendent was now regularly losing his temper: "When he gets angry it is not a mild tantrum, its [sic] vicious. Today he got angry and among other things said, 'You are full of shit.'" Goruk said the plant superintendent was using these emotional outbursts to intimidate local union officials into dropping a good portion of worker grievances. The local union president characterized the superintendent's excessive anger, profanity, and arbitrary treatment of union representatives as a serious violation of the norms for modern labour-management relations: "For a plant Supt. that lack of control over his temper, the irresponsible attitude towards the Union Officers, the absence of respectable sense of fair and unbiased judgement is very frustrating to us." Goruk's depiction implicitly

[126] "Police Picket Watch Protest Referred," *Edmonton Journal*, 23 August.
[127] *The Canadian Packinghouse Worker,* October 1966.

contrasts the disreputable behaviour of the plant superintendent with the rational, reasonable, and above all, highly controlled and respectful behaviour of the union representatives. The superintendent is described as not "interested in our presentation nor facts of the case under discussion," and "childish" for handling grievances like negotiating chips, which encouraged union representatives to "dream up 16 grievances and settle for the original 8."[128]

The contrast Goruk draws between an irrational, unreasonable, and out-of-control superintendent, and union leaders behaving logically and unemotionally was used to bolster the legitimacy of local union leadership and discredit management. His strategy also suggests that these masculine norms were an important currency within the union itself, since the audience for this interpretation was the union's national officers, whose intervention he was seeking. The incident illustrates how local union leaders drew selectively on both rough and respectable notions of trade union masculinity, but also that there were significant areas of overlap between respectable working-class manhood and the middle-class manly modern, particularly an emphasis on reason and emotional self-control.

An article published in the union's national newsletter a year earlier further illustrates the way union men mobilized these overlapping notions of respectable masculinity, again to discredit management. The article poked fun at an unnamed superintendent in "the West" -- quite possibly the Edmonton man -- for indulging in the same behaviour. Claiming that packinghouse workers "as a rule are not shrinking violets," the piece asserts the legitimacy of union objections to "the superintendent's constant stream of profanities." The superintendent had claimed that he was not the only guilty one because workers also "used the same sort of

[128] Goruk, "Re: Superintendent." (LAC, CFAW fonds, MG 28 I-186, accession 1984-0536, Box 11) 3 June 1967.

expressions." The union's response, that as the superintendent "it was he who was setting the example," played on the fact that this important management figure had drawn on the highly denigrated language and behaviour of rough working-class masculinity.[129] The understated, humorous tone of the article, use of refined language, and emphasis on logic, challenged a popular image of packinghouse men as crude and unreasonable.

A 1968 walk-out by Gainer workers concerned about the safety of the newly mechanized beef kill line further illustrates contrasting notions of trade union masculinity within the union's leadership. Local union president Cliff Cummings led the walk out, which netted significant victories. The union's regional director, Norm Riches, however, was highly critical of such a confrontational approach because of the risk it posed to the union. In a lengthy note to the national director, Fred Dowling, Riches focused almost exclusively on the role of Cummings, who the company told him had instigated the job action to win support for the local's upcoming executive elections. To give the union "some legal protection" Riches had quickly advised Cummings to explain to the men that "the refusal to work as instructed could be violation of the contract and Alberta Labour Act" and to send them back to work. Riches felt the union local should have given the company more time to act on the safety issue to reduce the union's financial risk.[130]

The regional union director's risk-management approach to workers' safety concerns raises the question of whether union officials were mimicking the manly modern faith in professionalism, rationalism, and regulation. Christopher Dummitt's argument that the

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[129] "Speak No Evil...The Staff May Be Listening," *Canadian Packinghouse Worker*, August. It is unclear whether this article was written by someone at the local or the national level of the union.
[130] Riches. (LAC, CFAW fonds, MG 28 I-186, accession 1984-0536, Box 20, 319 Gainers 1954-1975) 3 January 1968. There is no evidence of the outcome.

concept of risk management is central to the manly modern ideal, associates the ability to control modern risks (like industrial production) with middle-class masculinity. Within this construct there is an effort to control danger and ensure "progress" by calculating "probabilities of harm," establishing "mechanisms and routines to minimize difficulty" and by "learning" from mistakes.[131] His assessment of Vancouver ironworkers, however, would be strengthened by taking into account the historical roots of their attitudes in notions of respectable trade union masculinity. The union context of democratic decision-making in pursuit of collective goals distinguishes unions from corporations, which are typically characterized by rational hierarchies and centralized, authoritarian decision-making in pursuit of profit. Also, the roots of a masculine union culture of skill building and self-improvement, which can be traced to the nineteenth-century, are distinct from manly modern notions of training and regulation aimed at professionalism.[132] Instead, Riches' risk-management approach to workers' safety concerns is more accurately seen as a convergence of middle-class and respectable working-class styles of masculinity. David Camfield does not consider the influence of notions of masculinity (such as the trade union ideal of the male breadwinner), but his analysis of a more recent labour dispute provides an additional explanation for the risk-management approach of union leaders that is rooted in the postwar labour relations system itself. Camfield emphasizes the need for top labour officials and NDP leaders to take "a serious look at what labour officials are as a group, a social layer, at what they do, and at their relationships with workers, employers and the state."[133] His point

[131] Dummitt, *The Manly Modern*. 13
[132] My thanks to Craig Heron for these insights.
[133] David Camfield, "Neoliberalism and Working-Class Resistance in British Columbia: The Hospital Employees' Union Struggle, 2002-2004," *Labour/Le Travail* 57, no. Spring (2006). 14.

is that full-time union officials are very invested in the bureaucratic union as an institution, because it is the source of their livelihood, and this makes them more supportive of social democratic politics than of union militancy, which is costly and damages relationships with employers.

The western regional director's response to the 1968 beef kill walk out suggests that the divergence between rough and respectable notions of trade union masculinity at local and upper levels of the union leadership was intensifying. At the local level there was significant resistance to this emphasis on rationalism as well as professionalism and expertise. The willingness of the beef kill men at the Gainer plant and the president of their local to pursue a safety issue so aggressively can be seen as anti-modern resistance to what Dummitt has called the "colonization" of working-class male bodies for the benefit of middle-class men.[134] An anecdote by a former Swift worker who became president of his local and then a union staff man, indicates grassroots confidence in worker knowledge and resistance to manly modern notions of professionalism and expertise. John Ventura, an unskilled worker who began working at the Swift plant in the 1970s, recalled the "lousy job" by professional engineers who redesigned the beef packing line. Ventura remembered "laughing" at the engineers with other workers because "it was just very poor engineering...we knew it wouldn't work. Because they didn't ask the workers."[135] Yet former Alberta staff representative, Jack Hampson, lamented the shift away from rationalizing contract demands by the 1970s compared to the early years under national pattern bargaining. In a 1977 interview Hampson explained:

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[134] Dummitt, *The Manly Modern*. 64
[135] Ventura, Interview Transcript.

> See there was a time when you went to the bargaining table and you had to come with a brief and you had to support what you were talking about...that changed in the later years. You didn't bother supporting anything, you just went in there and said this is what we want, if you don't do it we'll strike.[136]

Hampson's desire for facts obtained through careful research and analysis by union professionals before reaching the bargaining table illustrates the influence of respectable trade union masculinity on upper-level union leaders and indicates some degree of convergence between this ideal and the manly modern.[137]

During the same time period union minutes reveal rank and file ambivalence about displays of rough masculinity within the local leadership. At the Canada Packers local where Alex Goruk remained a key figure, a pattern of domineering leadership that at times compromised democratic processes persisted, but also appears to have been challenged more overtly than in the immediate postwar years.[138] In a 1968 incident the chief steward and assistant chief steward resigned briefly because of conflict with Goruk. The chief steward reversed his decision after Goruk spoke to the two men "as a friend and man-to-man," which suggests that when challenged, he drew on a dominant understanding of respectable trade union masculinity to strengthen his position in the local. The main issue appeared to be a lack of transparency about union business. Two years later Goruk's leadership again became a focus of the local. In January, 1970 Goruk was able to persuade the membership to expand

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[136] Hampson, Interview Transcript.
[137] As David Camfield has noted, full-time union staff have a vested interest in professionalism, which enhances their job security. Camfield, "Neoliberalism and Working-Class Resistance in British Columbia: The Hospital Employees' Union Struggle, 2002-2004."
[138] Reimer, Interview.

his powers as president so that he could make minor decisions without "running to the executive" for their approval. A few months later "destructive comments" and complaints about lack of communication between the officers and the membership caused Goruk to resign suddenly and hold a secret ballot on his leadership, which resulted in his reinstatement.[139]

Union minutes for the Canada Packers local reveal a concern about the rough behaviour of those attending local union meetings, particularly the ability of the leadership to maintain "control." For example, following Alex Goruk's brief 1968 resignation, he chastized the assistant chief steward for his "outburst of temper [that he] must learn to control."[140] A month later the chief steward, in response to pressure from other union officers, "apologized for his tone of voice and loudness, but not the statements" he had made regarding Goruk's recent resignation.[141] There were also general complaints from members about the "lack of order" at local union meetings.[142] A union officer's request that members "please not pick on" one individual in particular, "and instead treat him with a little kindness and consideration" indicates that bullying behaviour persisted, but was frowned on.[143] Compared to staff reports on Edmonton union meetings in the 1940s there appears to be a greater concern about union leaders being able to maintain order and control, particularly emotional control, in the meetings.[144]

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[139] Canada Packers Local 243, "GMM Minutes 1966-1973." 1 May 1968; 23 April 1970.
[140] ———, "Officers' Meeting Minutes 1967-1970." 29 May 1968.
[141] *Ibid.* 16 February 1970
[142] *Ibid.* 4 June 1970
[143] ———, "GMM Minutes 1966-1973." 6 May 1970
[144] Admittedly union minutes and staff reports are very different forms of evidence, which makes it difficult to trace changes in attitude toward loud, aggressive, or disorderly behaviour in union meetings over time. Nevertheless, in staff reports and miscellaneous correspondence from the earlier period there is less evidence of attempts to curtail aggressive behaviour.

This concern was also evident at the national level where one staff person tried to control the behaviour of delegates who participated in national negotiations, particularly their use of "packinghouse language." Canadian packing workers, including those in Edmonton, made rough language a hallmark of their negotiating style, but in an interview the union's elegant French-Canadian staff woman, Huguette Plamondon, said that she campaigned to eliminate the use of profanity during her tenure as an international representative in Quebec from the 1950s through the 1970s. In some cases Plamondon said she got up and left the negotiating table when workers persisted in using foul language because: "If you have a good case you don't need that because it takes away your reputation but adds nothing to the argument."[145] Plamondon's emphasis on self-control and the use of reason was typical of the long tradition of respectable trade union masculinity. She may also have felt that her own femininity was compromised by their profanity, particularly since Plamondon was married to the packing union's Canadian director, Romeo Mathieu.[146] Burns worker Ellen B.'s recruitment by male workers to the job of secretary-treasurer in the 1970s after she stood up to male verbal harassment on the shop floor with unrepentant profanity, illustrates the strong contrast between attitudes toward rough behaviour at the local and national levels of the union.[147]

The first union merger in 1968 intensified conservatism at upper levels of the packing union and Alberta union leaders responded to this by crafting a highly masculinist trade union identity that was confrontational and aggressive. In a telling incident an officious auditor from the newly merged union's international office disrupted an Alberta union

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[145] Plamondon, Interview.
[146] *Ibid.*
[147] See Chapter Six.

council meeting because of a technicality. According to leaders of the Alberta Council, the auditor stood up in the middle of the meeting and challenged its legality, alleging that the Council had not yet obtained a formal charter from the international office since the merger. Edmonton union leaders Alex Goruk and Peter Kolba were angered by Horton's intervention because it undermined their efforts to persuade Alberta members in attendance of the benefits of the merger.

In an exchange of letters about the incident between local union leaders and an international union executive, Alberta men used a combative tone to defend their autonomy and self-respect in the face of what they saw as highly controlling and bureaucratic men at the international office. Alex Goruk and Peter Kolba wrote heated letters both jointly with president of the Lethbridge union local, Norm Leclaire, and separately to a top official of the international union. In the joint letter they expressed resentment about the international leadership's lack of respect for their knowledge and understanding of the local perspective, particularly as Canadians: "I think it is an insult to the intelligence of the Canadian people when we have to import an administrator from Houston, Texas, to handle the affairs of a local union in Canada."[148] The tone was also aggressive, warning International Secretary Treasurer of the union, Patrick Gorman, that Horton would be banned from attending future meetings if he continued "disrupting" their merger program in Alberta.

In his response, the international union executive revealed the high value he placed on administrative efficiency to facilitate tighter control at the local level, and on reasoned, emotionally restrained debate. Patrick Gorman defended the auditor's behaviour, pointing

[148] Peter Kolba, Norm Leclaire, and Alex Goruk, (LAC, CFAW fonds, MG 28 I-186, accession 1984-0536, Box 1, Alberta Provincial Council, 1968-80, 15 May, 1970).

out that the Alberta council minutes did not mention the name of the Amalgamated union anywhere and criticized the Alberta leaders for not providing "facts" about the incident. He also accused them of trying to bully the international office by insisting that outside interference from Horton had to stop: "If this is not a direct sub rosa threat to withdraw from the international Union unless you can have your own way, I really don't know what is."[149]

The Alberta unionists reacted with mounting hostility to what they felt were trivial and distorting criticisms. They asserted the importance of democratic processes and vehemently rejected the apparent expectation of local deference toward the international leadership. President of Canada Packers' Lethbridge local, Norm Leclaire, pointed to the fact that small Alberta locals were not represented at the convention where the merger decision was made because they could not afford the cost of sending delegates, which required extra care and consideration from the international office. He denied that the earlier letter from Alberta leaders had been threatening, stating: "When we have something to say to you nothing will be said "SUB ROSA" but will be spelled out plainly." His denial revealed very different definitions of "threatening" language at the local and international level of the union. Characterizing Horton's behaviour as "stupid" and "heavy handed," Leclaire also emphasized his right to "criticize and condemn" the international office. Alex Goruk was more explicit about the hierarchical attitude he detected in Patrick Gorman's handling of the Horton incident: "you seem to feel that we have no right to critize [sic] the deplorable and undesireable [sic] actions of an International Auditor." Goruk emphasized that, "the Union that I belong to is a Democratic rank and file controlled organization." He said this meant he

[149] Patrick Gorman, (Chicago: LAC, CFAW fonds, MG 28 I-186, accession 1984-0536, Box 1, Alberta Provincial Council, 1968-80, 2 June, 1970).

had the right to express his opinion and to criticize senior union officers "without fear of reprisals in any way shape or form!" He rejected the "philosophy" of treating a union member "like a computer number, where he simply pays his dues, where he is told by the top brass what rights he has and does not have, and is reprimanded in some form or other if he steps out of line in the opinion of the brass." Goruk concluded by insisting that Alberta unionists refuse to "be treated like little children by a domineering father."[150] The heated exchange suggests that Alberta leaders defined themselves as trade union men in opposition to international union men who they perceived to be bureaucratic, ignorant, hierarchical, and paternalistic. The emphasis they placed on democratic processes was aimed at asserting the value of local knowledge and control. Their impassioned language and choice of confrontation over compromise challenged the authority of the international leadership's bureaucratic rationalism and putative objectivity. A widening gap between these understandings of masculine trade union leadership helped set the stage for growing conflict within the Canadian district of the union in the 1970s.

In the 1974 and 1978 meatpacking labour disputes, which saw Alberta workers twice vote down an agreement recommended by their national union executive, Alberta packing workers mobilized a heroic and confrontational masculine image of trade unionism by emphasizing the role their greater militancy played in the disputes. In an interview many years later, a comment by Norm Leclaire, who was the union's Alberta spokesman during both disputes, captured the feeling of many Alberta packing men: "we didn't want a rate that was higher than everybody else, we just didn't think that the everybody else level was high

[150] Alex Goruk, (LAC, CFAW fonds, MG 28 I-186, accession 1984-0536, Box 1, Alberta Provincial Council, 1968-80, 21 August, 1970).

enough. We pulled it up, we won both times, both years."[151] In an interview a few years after the first labour dispute and before the second one, former Edmonton union leader, Alex Goruk, displayed considerable pride in the militancy of Alberta delegates: "As a matter of fact we suspected from time to time that even our national office, our district director, was somewhat upset with us because of our militancy."[152]

This image challenged the rhetoric of national office executives, which conveyed their professionalism and consistency in playing by agreed labour relations rules. In newspaper coverage of the 1974 dispute comments directed at the companies by Toronto-based Canadian director of the CFAW, Romeo Mathieu, emphasized that the national executive had recommended acceptance of the mediated terms to its membership and had withdrawn its strike notice to hold another vote before the companies started the lockout: "We went out of our way to make the packing plants understand our position and our acceptance of the latest offer and they lock us out. It is beyond understanding." Mathieu also called the companies "irresponsible" for locking out workers.[153]

Although this projection of cooperative, reasonable, and responsible behaviour contrasted sharply with the oppositional emphasis by Alberta union leaders, central to both images were an array of highly gendered qualities that have long been tightly connected to notions of masculinity in popular culture, qualities such as "strength, daring, courage, rationality [and] intellect."[154] At first glance it is tempting to see the hyper-masculine image of Alberta union leaders in the 1970s as an expression of regional stereotypes that Alvin

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[151] Leclaire, Interview Transcript.
[152] Goruk, Interview Transcript.
[153] Jan-Udo Wenzel, "2 Packing Plants Lock out Employees," *Edmonton Journal*, 5 June 1974.
[154] Michael Kaufman, *Beyond Patriarchy: Essays by Men on Pleasure, Power and Change* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1987). 3.

Finkel has explained, have depicted Alberta as "a frontier, cowboy society, where individualism reigned supreme and the interventions of an outside government were unwelcome."[155] Nevertheless, Finkel has argued that in the 1970s as the province became more urbanized, industrialized, and multicultural: "many of its citizens, even if they were recent arrivals, identified with [this] nostalgic view of the province." In their classic text Harold and Tamara Palmer point to the "class interests of oil wealth" as key to cultivating a right-wing political ideology "built on a social-Darwinian faith in the efficiency and morality of an economy based on individualism and rooted in a vision of western Canada, particularly Alberta, as one of the last frontiers of economic opportunity."[156] This dominant narrative of the West, as Elizabeth Jameson and Sheila McManus have noted, is overwhelmingly male and white.[157] A gender analysis of the 1970s labour disputes provides insight into how unionized workers in Alberta drew on, and thus helped perpetuate, a masculine stereotype of the West that, ironically, served the interests of capital.

The 1974 lockout and 1978 strike/lock-out were shaped by major developments such as industry restructuring and technological change, the 1966 strike, and the 1968 union merger, which reduced the efficacy of a more restrained, cooperative style of masculinity within the local trade union leadership. Given that a scholarly study of national union records relating to these labour disputes has not yet been written, my gender analysis of national executive behavior is necessarily limited and speculative. Nevertheless, it is clear that the national executive's decision to negotiate a deal with management broke with the

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[155] Finkel, *Our Lives*. 223. The intensity of the "Western exceptionalism" debate over early twentieth-century working-class militancy -- which has been firmly laid to rest and peaked in Canadian labour history -- is a function of this regional stereotype. Bercuson, "Labour Radicalism; Heron, ed. *The Workers' Revolt in Canada, 1917-1925.*

[156] Palmer and Palmer, *Alberta*. 342-3.

[157] Jameson and McManus, *One Step over the Line*. "Introduction."

previous practice of having a national negotiating committee comprised of delegates elected from union locals across the country work directly with management to secure a deal that they then decided whether or not to recommend to the national membership. The new style of negotiating was likely a response to pressure from more conservative international union executives after the merger, who were anxious to avoid a repeat of the costly 1966 strike. This negotiating style also projected a modern image of trade union masculinity as reasonable and cooperative.

Edmonton packing unionists responded angrily to the national union executive's new negotiating strategy. On the first day of the 1974 lock-out the *Edmonton Journal* reported that the right to have a voice in negotiations was the most consistent refrain among a "swarm" of 300 male unionists outside a local union meeting. One man complained, "We are being told what to do without being consulted." Workers accused the national union director, Romeo Mathieu, of talking to the companies but not attending union meetings, and of "not looking out for us, but for [the union's] national reputation." A packing man was quoted saying, "We have not had a say in the negotiations since they started." Another said, "Nobody asked our opinion if we wanted to settle the way the union proposed ... When are we going to have our say?"[158]

An equally important issue for Alberta packing workers, however, was the proposed wage increase and benefits, particularly pensions, which most felt would not allow them to maintain their standard of living in a province experiencing another economic boom. Cuts to oil production by the Organization for Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) in 1972 had triggered dramatic economic expansion in Alberta because of its oil-based economy while

[158] Wenzel, "2 Packing Plants Lock out Employees."

putting the rest of the country into a deepening recession. Construction workers, who were vital to companies like Syncrude, which was building a tar sands plant in northern Alberta, had negotiated "excellent" wages and packing workers were determined to keep up.[159] Another compelling factor, however, was the myth of the male breadwinner embraced by most trade union men. In an interview more than thirty years later the union's Alberta spokesman during the strike, Norm Leclaire, explained, "In the '70s we had some particular problems. That was one of our oil booms going on and jesus the pressure was on to push wages higher and higher ... pressure from our members."[160] Leclaire said Alberta workers' distinctive militancy was driven largely by the need to keep up with their neighbours: "You knew what job your neighbour did and he didn't work nearly as hard as you and you wanted to make as much money as he did."[161] The fact that plants outside the province but close to Alberta's borders voted in a similar fashion reinforces the idea that economic and regional factors were important influences: In 1974 ninety-one per cent of eligible packing workers voted on the offer recommended by the national union executive and nine out of eleven plants in Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec, and the Maritimes voted for acceptance. In Alberta seven out of eight plants voted against it with results in British Columbia and Saskatchewan mixed.[162]

The growing economic chasm between regions within the Canadian district of the union, and the shift to more centralized Toronto-based control also occurred against a backdrop of growing Western alienation in the 1970s that was centred in Alberta. A stand-

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[159] Alvin Finkel, "The Boomers Become the Workers: Alberta, 1960-1980," in *Working People in Alberta: A History*, ed. Alvin Finkel (Edmonton: Athabasca University Press, 2012). 158-159.
[160] Leclaire, Telephone Interview.
[161] *Ibid.*
[162] Wenzel, "Packing Plant Offer Rejected."

off between Alberta Progressive Conservative Premier Peter Lougheed and Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau over the federal government's right to dictate trade terms for Alberta's energy resources was given extensive news coverage provincially and nationally, reviving a deep-seated historical memory in Alberta of Central Canadian economic discrimination and exploitation. As Alvin Finkel has explained, "the notion that they were living in a modern version of the Wild West attracted many Albertans, and made their quarrel with the federal government, which was motivated by selfishness, justified or not, appear to be one of high principle."[163]

Alberta packing leaders responded to these larger cultural, political, and economic forces by projecting a heroic confrontational image of trade union masculinity to strengthen their claims against national union men in the 1970s who appeared "embedded" with management. Union minutes for Edmonton's Swift local in 1974 state that workers were "insulted" by the company's final contract offer, and ten days later one local union leader proclaimed to the press that workers would not accept the companies' latest offer even "if they were locked out for 12 years."[164] The union men in Alberta also took pride in their resistance to company strategies aimed at isolating Alberta workers within their union during the dispute, such as the companies' "five-point plan," which would have allowed workers in each plant to sign a contract separately if a majority of the membership was in agreement.[165] In a 1995 interview with Ian MacLachlan about the 1974 dispute, Norm Leclaire, who was the union's Alberta business agent in the 1970s, emphasized that Alberta workers were

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[163] Finkel, *Our Lives*. 223.
[164] Swift Local 280, "Swift GMM Minutes." 4 June 1974. "Results of Vote: Beef Processing Plant Manager Still Waiting."
[165] Wenzel, "Packing Plant Offer Rejected."

strongly committed to the national system of pattern bargaining: "we were never attacking the system."[166] This emphasis distinguished Alberta packing leaders from those in the national office under Romeo Mathieu's direction who, in the second week of the lock-out, allowed the Alberta members to go it alone, if they wanted.[167]

The complexities of the 1978 national strike/lock-out triggered by Alberta workers, combined with their militancy to intensify the dichotomous masculinist images of packing union leaders. This time when the union struck Swift packinghouses across the country and Canada Packers locked out its workers in each city where it also had a packinghouse, thousands of Canada Packers workers across the country were put out on the street, even though they had voted to accept the recommended settlement. The confusing strike/lock-out situation put the national system of pattern bargaining into a negative light as an incomprehensible bureaucracy in which ordinary workers became "trapped," and the national union executive appeared to be distant, insensitive, and arbitrary in its decision-making. In a *Toronto Star* article about Canada Packers workers locked out in Toronto, union members expressed anger toward national executives of the union, lumping them in with management: "The higher-ups in business and the union seem to be making decisions in my life," one male picketer told the reporter, adding, "People I don't know are making decisions for me." A woman picketer said, "I don't understand the procedure between the company and the union and the contract, but it's wrong." The reporter concluded that Canada Packers workers were forced to continue walking their picket lines "hoping that a committee of workers they didn't elect, bargaining with a company they don't work for will reach a settlement enabling them

[166] Leclaire, Interview Transcript.
[167] "Union Offers Talks." Joyce, Interview.

to go back to work."[168] The confusion of many workers about how they could be locked out when they had voted in favour of the contract fortified a masculinist image of Big Labour as impersonal and dangerously powerful, which undermined its claims to political respectability and legitimacy. The risk was that this could make it easier for business and government to justify harsh or coercive measures against organized workers.[169]

In the 1978 dispute Alberta workers continued to present a distinctive image of intransigence. The Edmonton local of Canada Packers was the only local in the country to initially reject the final contract settlement ratified by the national membership, voting seventy-seven per cent against it. Right before the final vote Edmonton union leaders told reporters "the proposed contract falls far short of what the employees have been demanding in Edmonton."[170] When Canada Packers decided to take back employees "as it needs them" after the lock-out ended local Canada Packers workers expressed their disapproval by staying off the job an extra day to hold "study sessions."[171]

Interviews with former meatpacking union leaders and union staff tended to reinforce these contrasting images of trade union masculinity. Union leaders from Alberta displayed a distinctive masculine pride in the militancy of provincial packing workers. A few years after the 1974 lock-out Alex Goruk, who was president of Edmonton's Canada Packers plant throughout most of the 1970s, explained in an interview that throughout those negotiations Alberta delegates were the most militant.

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[168] John Spears, "4,000 Caught in Trap: No Work, No Benefits," *Toronto Star*, 29 July 1978.
[169] For more on the image of Big Labour in the 1960s see Sangster, "The Tilco Strike."
[170] "Meat Workers Expected to Reject Pact."
[171] *Ibid.* "Packers to Stay Out."

> Every time that the companies would make an offer ... it was the Albert delegates who consistently voted and spoke against a settlement. And I think that this was designed to teach those Alberta guys a lesson – we'll lock them out. Because we were very consistent...very vocal. And when our people met, the union people, to discuss the latest offer, it would always be the Alberta delegates would lead the fight against accepting that.[172]

Goruk's reference to packing workers as "guys" and his use of combative language is consistent with the heroic style of masculine union leadership that had long dominated local packinghouses. Gerry Beauchamp, president of Edmonton's Swift local in the 1970s, expressed a similar sense of pride many years later. He felt the union leaders in central Canada were more conservative because of their close proximity to the union's national office, which made them more vulnerable to its moderating influence: "our national office would work on the people in Toronto and Winnipeg."[173] Beauchamp saw Edmonton union leaders like himself as more autonomous, decisive and honest, in comparison to union leaders at the Toronto Swift plant who refused to allow him to attend a Toronto local's regular union meeting: "They wouldn't let us – myself and the chief steward – go to the meeting and tell the people exactly what's going on."[174]

Alberta workers also seemed to draw masculine pride from the West's role in the packing industry nationally. Alex Goruk used gendered imagery to explain the higher level of militancy among Alberta workers and their delegates at negotiations, by implicitly depicting Alberta packing workers as more masculine than their central Canadian counterparts: "we have a little more muscle than the others. We kill more hogs and cattle

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[172] Goruk, Interview Transcript.
[173] Beauchamp, Interview.
[174] *Ibid.*

than any other given province. We slaughter an awful lot. Canada Packers with four plants in Alberta, you know, you have a lot of muscle."[175] Since restructuring had moved more of the slaughtering work to Alberta and men performed the slaughtering work in the industry while women worked primarily in the lighter meat processing work, a greater proportion of which occurred in Central Canada, particularly Toronto, there is an implicit suggestion that workers in the West were more masculine and thus more powerful.

In comparison, union officials in Ontario and Quebec tended to recall this era as one when at least a few Alberta union leaders were unreasonable and opinionated. In an interview, the packing union's only female international staff representative for many years, Huguette Plamondon, responded to a question about her knowledge of Alberta union leaders by saying, "the guys from the West, especially Alberta, the whole world, there was never enough for them." She also said they were critical of "everything the East was doing" and "thought they were smarter than even the guys from Toronto."[176] Comments by Charlie Bonello, a Toronto-based business agent with the union in the 1970s, also project an image of Alberta packing workers as less restrained and more disruptive than those in Central Canada. He explained that some Alberta packing unionists had called fellow union members in Central and Eastern Canada "derogatory names" for accepting lower contract terms, causing "quite a bit of friction" within the union.[177]

One continuity between male union leaders at the local and national level during these labour disputes, however, was their adherence to patriarchal values that subordinated women. The highly masculinized identities that Alberta and national trade unionists

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[175] Goruk, Interview Transcript.
[176] Plamondon, Interview.
[177] Bonello, Interview.

performed during the 1970s labour disputes in Canada's meatpacking industry continued to erase the presence and influence of women workers, who comprised between fifteen and twenty per cent of the labour force in packinghouses across the country.[178] Once again, gendered strike pay and picketing rules subordinated women and newspaper coverage of the disputes rendered them nearly invisible. Edmonton consistently referred to workers in gender-neutral terms or described them as "men." The only female noted in *Edmonton Journal* and union newsletter coverage of the 1978 strike/lock-out was a child who joined her father on the picket line **[Figure 18]**.

The militant image of trade union leadership deployed by Alberta packing unionists during two national labour disputes in the 1970s was shaped largely in opposition to a notion of disciplined professionalism and restraint adopted increasingly by national executives of the union. Viewed through a gendered lens these events were influenced by shifting industry and occupational structures and regional tensions within the packing union under the elaborate system of national pattern bargaining established after World War Two. Frustrated by shrinking local autonomy in confrontations with local management, feeling a growing sense that the national union office had compromised its political legitimacy by violating democratic trade union principles, and pushed by the need to keep up in the unique context of Alberta's latest oil boom, Alberta packing men mobilized gender to strengthen their position. Their hyper-masculine trade union identity drew on the industry's more pronounced gender

[178] By 1974 restructuring had created very different proportions of male and female workers in Alberta and Ontario, although the degree of difference had become less significant by 1978. The proportion of women workers in Alberta was a little more than half the number in Ontario: 11% in Alberta *versus* 21% in Ontario. This gender shift resulting from restructuring would have made the Alberta wing of the union the most male-dominated in the country throughout the 1970s, but particularly in 1974. The percentage of women workers nationally dropped from 20% in 1960 to 16% in 1979. It dropped in Ontario from 22% to 17% and in Alberta from 20% to 14% in the same time period. Statistics Canada, "The Slaughtering and Meat Packing Industry and the Sausage and Casings Industry 1949-79."

imbalance in the province to tap into an image of white male strength and economic power in the West, particularly Alberta, promoted by middle-class male oil interests amidst another oil boom to bolster their political influence. The degree to which women were excluded from the public face of the union and local influence helped to sustain male privilege and power in the union. Within this larger context, the successful and highly gendered militancy of Alberta packing workers, which drew on a romantic image of the North American West, can be seen more clearly as an effective discursive strategy by working-class men to strengthen their class and gender position in the face of intensifying threats from management and women.

Gendering Working-Class Politics

The highly masculine image of union power that was so effective at the bargaining table became a liability for Edmonton packing men in the political arena where they strove to win municipal and provincial seats during the postwar decades. It is no coincidence that the packing worker who rose to the highest political office in the province was a woman. Gender was central to Ethel Wilson's remarkable political success, which she achieved while continuing to work full-time as a seamstress in the laundry department at the Burns plant and, according to one of her daughters, raising three children "single-handedly."[179]

Although the labour movement provided vital electoral support initially at the municipal level, Wilson won broader support by downplaying her labour credentials and promoting herself as a representative of and advocate for women. Wilson first ran for Edmonton City Council in 1950 as a "straight labour candidate" and was defeated, then in

[179] Ethel Wilson had eight grandchildren (one who pre-deceased her) and twelve great grandchildren at the time of her death in 1983. Helgason, "Ethel Wilson."

1952, although she still ran as a labour representative, Wilson was invited to join the conservative Citizen's Committee (C.C.) and won.[180] At an all-candidates meeting during the 1952 campaign Wilson firmly rejected public criticism from prominent independent Alberta Federation of Labour candidate Carl Berg that as a member of the business-backed C.C. slate she could not be a labour candidate. Yet unlike Berg, who pressed contract issues related to police and fire fighters during the campaign, Wilson remained silent on labour issues and emphasized her support for a money bill to complete Royal Alexandra Hospital's maternity wing.[181]

In the next municipal election gender and class intersected very differently for two male packing unionists, producing a political image that was more easily constructed as threatening, perhaps even dangerous, which undermined their support. In 1954 Canada Packers unionists Alex Goruk and Roy Jamha managed to get onto the C.C. slate by being nominated from the floor thanks to a large turn-out of labour people at the nominations meeting. In the union's national newsletter, Goruk, who was president of his union local, said that their strategy of packing the nomination meeting (which was not uncommon within the packing union), had engendered much "criticism by those who are in the 'higher class.' They don't think a working, or shall I say labor man or woman should be on the Council."[182] A letter to the editor published in the *Edmonton Journal,* however, discredited the two packing men as "union representatives...with strong sectional interests...seemingly endorsed by the Citizens' Committee," for the "technique" they used "to gain control of our city

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[180]Mary B. Mark, "'Thankful for Farm Background' Says Hon. Mrs. Ethel Wilson," *South Edmonton Sun*, 8 December 1962.
[181] "Aldermanic Candidates Clash in Alberta Ave. Election Meet," *Edmonton Journal*, 11 October; "Candidates Urge Passing of Five Money Bylaws," *Edmonton Journal*, 10 October.
[182] *Canadian Packinghouse Worker*, October 1954, 15.

affairs." The letter writer made vague but damaging McCarthy-like allegations, suggesting that civic affairs "should not rest in the hands of any person whose strongest affiliations might be vested in a group outside of our own country."[183]

Business backers managed to oust the union men from the C.C. slate one week before the election by arranging a second nomination meeting specifically to displace them and to endorse the "original" slate (which included Ethel Wilson). They also ran large newspaper advertisements on the eve of the election. The "original" C.C. slate won handily.[184] Despite this high-handed last-minute intervention it was the male packing workers who were depicted as anti-democratic and dangerous in election coverage of these events by the *Edmonton Journal* – a newspaper with a monopoly that played the role of handmaiden to Edmonton's business elite.[185]

In comparison, during the 1952 election that had resulted in her first municipal win, Ethel Wilson deflected attention from her labour credentials by emphasizing her gender, which helps explain why business backers invited her to join the C.C. slate. In one candidates meeting held amidst the controversy that erupted over how much representation labour should have on city council, Wilson asserted, "There are people who feel I shouldn't run because I'm a woman...It took a woman to convince council that bus service should stay in the city."[186] Wilson avoided ideological issues and counted among her achievements service

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[183] "Civic-Minded", "Views on Nomination," *Edmonton Journal*, 2 October 1954.
[184] "New Citizens' Group Formed for Civic Election Support," *Edmonton Journal*, 5 October; "Your Citizens' Committee Adermanic Candidates!," *Edmonton Journal*, 9 October. "Make This a Golden Year of Progress and Prosperity for Edmonton!," *Edmonton Journal*, 12 October.
[185] Lightbody, "Edmonton." 266
[186] It seems clear that the C.C. organizers needed at least one or two women to appeal to women voters. A letter to the editor from a woman in 1958 decried the C.C. for dropping one of its female candidates. Mrs. R. Gardner, "Women for Council?," *Edmonton Journal*, 8 October 1958.

on the library and health boards. In pre-election media coverage she focused on explaining how government worked and encouraged citizens to vote.[187]

Ethnicity intersected with class and gender in ways that likely further advantaged Wilson and handicapped Goruk, who was of Ukrainian heritage, and Jamha, who had Lebanese roots. The only Ukrainian elected to city council before the 1970s was William Hawrelak, who, as a soft drink millionaire, was a poster boy for the entrepreneurism that was valued highly by Edmonton society during the booming postwar decades. A Ukrainian trade unionist was not elected to city council until 1980, just after the first packinghouse shutdown. Ethel Wilson's background, coming from an Anglo-Canadian family that farmed near Edmonton in the early twentieth century, likely enhanced her electoral appeal at a time when Edmonton's Anglo-Canadian-dominated society still held parochial attitudes toward those from outside the province.[188] The fact that Wilson was elected in years that had a very low voter turnout suggests that she was not reliant on the much more ethnically diverse working classes in Edmonton, who did not get out to vote as consistently as Anglo-Canadians.[189]

By the time Swift local president, Peter Uganecz, ran for an aldermanic seat in 1958 with the strong endorsement of Edmonton's labour movement, Ethel Wilson had

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[187] "25 Election Candidates Discuss Problems in Calder," *Edmonton Journal*, 7 October.

[188] Julia Kiniski provides a useful counterpoint to Ethel Wilson in terms of ethnicity. Kiniski was a Polish immigrant who pressed for child care facilities for working women and denounced the "dictatorship" of the C.C. slate when running for municipal office in the early 1950s. While it is difficult to parse the impact of ethnicity from class and gender, the fanfare that attended Kiniski's election as a progressive Polish-Canadian alderwoman in 1963 after ten years of unsuccessful municipal campaigns, suggests that it was more difficult for her to get elected to city council in Edmonton than Ethel Wilson. "Public Works Main Topic as Candidates Cross Swords," *Edmonton Journal*, 9 October. , *Edmonton Journal*, 17 October. Labour organizer and former Alberta NDP leader Neil Reimer found Albertans to be less forgiving toward him, as someone from Saskatchewan. Reimer, Interview.

[189] The following indicates the years Wilson was elected in bold followed by voter turnout in parentheses: **1952 (12.6%)**; 1953 (11.2%); **1954 (17%)**; **1955 (11.2%)**; **1956 (10%)**; 1957 (35.3%); **1958 (12.8%)**; 1959 (34.9%); **1960 (16.4%)**; 1961 (37.2%); **1962 (25.4%)**; 1963 (56.3%); **1964 (47.6%)**. Edmonton Public Library: www.epl.ca/Elections/EPLIndex.cfm

considerable name recognition as an incumbent compared to a male packing unionist trying to break into municipal politics.[190] Yet again, one of the key differences in reports on their comments at all-candidates meetings is in the image they projected in relation to organized labour and working-class concerns. In one report Uganecz was identified as president of his union local and a member of Edmonton and District Labour Council, in two others he advocated public ownership of utilities, reduced transit fares to help "working people," and provide better support for the unemployed.[191] Wilson was identified as a member of the city's library board. She was again strongly endorsed by a fellow C.C. incumbent, who said she "represents labor on council, and not to the detriment of other sections," implying that unlike other labour candidates she did not privilege labour issues.[192] In a pre-election forum Wilson emphasized her financial acumen and support for road construction, park land, and hospitals, but made no mention of organized labour or its particular concerns.[193]

The intersection of gender and class appears to have been just as central in provincial politics. Ethel Wilson's labour credentials again were secondary to her identity as a woman in newspaper coverage when she became the first local meatpacking worker to achieve provincial electoral success, winning the newly created Edmonton-North riding in 1959. Wilson ran no advertisements and coverage of her win ran on the "Social Activities" page aimed at women readers in an article focusing on "Four Women Elected" that described her as a seamstress who "was employed by Burns and Company Ltd for 17 years," which seemed

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[190] That year David Graham, president of the Gainer local at the time, ran unsuccessfully for the position of trustee on the Public School Board.
[191] "Nine Calder Voters Hear 18 Candidates," *Edmonton Journal*, 9 October; "Election Campaign at Halfway Mark; 24 Candidates at South Side Rally," *Edmonton Journal*, 10 October; "Rumors Fly Again at Campaign Rally as 23 Candidates Pledge Platforms," *Edmonton Journal*, 11 October.
[192] "Nine Calder Voters Hear 18 Candidates."
[193] "Election Campaign at Halfway Mark; 24 Candidates at South Side Rally."

to suggest that she no longer worked there. The article noted that she was a former secretary-treasurer of the Edmonton Labor Council and a former chair of the library board, but did not mention her past roles as vice-president of the Burns local and a union organizer.[194]

In comparison, male packing candidates were closely associated with trade unionism. Although one CCF candidate was elected in Edmonton in the 1948 provincial election with significant support from the packing community, UPWA provincial staff representative, Jack Hampson, who also ran for the CCF, lost that election by a narrow margin.[195] In all-candidates meetings Hampson, "speaking on behalf of CCF labor interests" called for more effective labour legislation and improvements to the Compensation Act, particularly benefits for women widowed because of industrial accidents.[196] Alex Goruk, who ran provincially in Edmonton-Northeast in 1959, billed himself in election advertisements as "Labour's Choice," citing his position as union president at Canada Packers, and his sponsorship by Edmonton Labor Council.[197]

In media interviews after Ethel Wilson was re-elected in 1962 and appointed cabinet minister without portfolio, she projected a populist image of femininity by emphasizing her farming background and her experience raising a family on a limited budget. A feature article published in the *Edmonton Journal* noted Wilson's appearance, citing her height and weight, (an aspect routinely ignored in coverage of male politicians) and her "vitality" as a woman who performed many different roles in the public sphere. When the reporter asked about the impact of a cabinet minister's salary on her standard of living Wilson explained

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[194]"Four Women Elected," *Edmonton Journal*, 19 June.
[195] Wark, *A Report on Alberta Elections, 1905-1982.*
[196] "Alberta Government 'Tory,' Roper Informs Meeting," *Edmonton Journal*, 31 July.
[197]Alex Goruk, "Share Alberta's Wealth (Campaign Advertisement)," *Edmonton Journal*, 17 June.

that she lived alone and did her own housework and was not interested in accumulating material things: "I live in a humble little cottage and I love every board of it." Details about Wilson's "active" role in organizing the Burns plant and as secretary of Edmonton Labor Council are related briefly and the article ends by describing her grown children.[198] **[Figure 19]** A profile article in the *South Edmonton Sun* takes a similar approach, emphasizing Wilson's farming background as a child and a young woman, which made her "practical," rather than her more recent experience as a full-time wage labourer who had been heavily involved in her union and the labour movement.[199] In another local article she was described as "representative of the woman's viewpoint on the executive council."[200] A few months later Wilson was pictured in the *Edmonton Journal* having tea with the only other woman to have held a provincial cabinet position in Alberta, Irene Parlby. Both women were made minister without portfolio, which was the least powerful cabinet position. Wilson was quoted saying, "I have always been thankful for my farm background."[201] Wilson's rural experience was a strong suit in a region clinging to a pre-modern pioneering image of itself amidst industrial development and urban growth.

Local male packing leaders overlooked Ethel Wilson's image as a woman in their interpretations of her political career. Alex Goruk, the long-running UPWA president at Edmonton's Canada Packers local, felt Wilson was "bought off" by Social Credit, like a number of "highly esteemed" labour people, to attract working-class votes.[202] UPWA's Alberta staff representative Jack Hampson explained Ethel Wilson's motivation for a

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[198] Fitzpatrick, "New Minister Lives in Humble Cottage."
[199] Mark, "'Thankful for Farm Background' Says Hon. Mrs. Ethel Wilson."
[200] *Ibid.*
[201] "Ethel Wilson," *Edmonton Journal*, 12 February.
[202] Goruk, Interview Transcript.

political career in terms of egotism and grandiosity, rather than a desire to serve disadvantaged people through the most effective means available to her, as plant workers and her family have suggested. After acknowledging that Wilson never turned down a position she was offered, and "did a lot of good work for the packinghouse workers union," Hampson attributed her political choices to "ego, some of it the obscure kind of life that she was forced to lead, working in the sewing department at the packing plant."[203] This judgment reveals the gendered assumption that it is inappropriate for women to pursue political power, and women who do so, unlike men, are presumed to do it for antisocial reasons.

Many UPWA leaders in Edmonton felt Wilson betrayed the labour movement, particularly the packing locals, which had provided crucial support during the early stages of her political career. They were especially critical of Wilson in 1960 for endorsing oppressive amendments to Alberta's Labour Act. In a resolution passed by UPWA's Edmonton Joint Council local packing workers said:

> ...we strongly oppose the position taken by Ethel Wilson for her anti-labour support of this bill and make it abundantly clear her views expressed in the legislature are not those of labour...now or in the future. There is no place in the labour movement for individuals to place personal desires or aspirations ahead of the welfare of the working people.[204]

UPWA's rejection clearly did little to damage Wilson's electoral prospects and may even have enhanced them. As in municipal politics, Ethel Wilson's success stemmed largely from becoming a member of the dominant party, despite that party's staunch anti-unionism. She

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[203] Hampson, Interview Transcript.
[204] ———, "Alberta Staff Reports, Local 233." General Reports, 28 February 1960.

attracted at least some grassroots support among packinghouse workers in the eastern reaches of Edmonton-North who ignored their union leadership, and was also able to appeal to the Anglo middle-class in Edmonton who dominated the riding and tended to vote.

Ethel Wilson was actively solicited as a political candidate by municipal and provincial business elites because they saw her as a labour representative who did not threaten the status quo and whose support would legitimize the groups that dominated government, and attract labour votes. In comparison male packing leaders, who cultivated an image as tough negotiators at the bargaining table, were more easily constructed as aggressive, manipulative, demanding and potentially dangerous. This was a serious liability for male packing candidates in Alberta's constrained Cold War environment.

Within the limited political space a Social Credit government afforded her, and drawing on maternal feminist ideals, Ethel Wilson pursued goals aimed at improving the lives of women in Alberta, particularly by educating them about politics so that they could become more politically engaged.[205] In a letter written after her mother's death, Wilson's daughter said her mother's experience as a single mother during the Depression "was the catalyst that made her such an ardent defender of the poor and disadvantaged yet also a strong proponent of independence and opportunity for women as well as men." Val Huene also recalled her mother's strong commitment to her constituents, whose telephone calls she answered "even at meal times."[206] These ideals provide insight into Wilson's decision to shift her energies from the labour movement into first municipal and later provincial politics. Her remarkable success suggests that the male-dominated and masculinist packing

[205] Finkel, "Populism and Gender." 91; Helgason, "Ethel Wilson."
[206] "Ethel Wilson Clippings File." Val Huene, June 1987.

environment was a major obstacle to Ethel Wilson's union activism, not lack of political ability.[207]

Ethel Wilson's achievements in political office attest to her commitment to Alberta women. As a cabinet minister she pioneered Alberta Women's Bureau, which conducted research on the legal and economic problems faced by women. She also developed a hostel for battered women, an aid program for families with children who had disabilities, and established an annual Girls Parliament to encourage girls to get involved in the political process.[208] Wilson's daughter called these activities "her pet projects."[209] As a Social Credit Member of Alberta's Legislative Assembly, however, Wilson abandoned labour's perspective, supporting severe anti-union legislation passed by the Ernest Manning government in 1960.[210] Alberta UPWA officials were outraged when she presumed to say she was speaking for labour, but their apparent inability to mobilize workers to mount a rally against her speaks volumes about her impact on the union's electoral politics.[211] The contrast between her record in the union and in electoral politics reinforces the impression that Wilson

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[207] _____, "Ethel Wilson."

[208] Finkel, "Populism and Gender." 81; Helgason, "Ethel Wilson; Lawrence Herzog, "The Hilltop House on the Market," *Edmonton Real Estate Weekly* 21, no. 22 (2003).

[209] Val Huene, June 1987.

[210] Key amendments prohibited information picketing outside an employers' premises to organize employees and denied certification to any bargaining unit that signed members this way, prohibited professionals such as doctors, architects, lawyers and engineers from unionizing, and prohibited job actions or secondary picketing to protest hiring non-union employees. The minister of labour was given the right to declare an emergency to end a strike where "life or property" were in serious jeopardy. Finkel, "The Cold War." 142-3

[211] In a staff report Jack Hampson said that members at a UPWA Joint Council meeting intended to organize a mass public meeting of workers to confront Wilson about her support for the amendments, but neither union records nor *The Edmonton Journal* reveal any evidence of such a meeting. Hampson, "Alberta Staff Reports, Local 233." General Report, 28 February 1960. Finkel, "The Cold War." 142-3

felt stymied in her efforts to achieve significant change for women within the union, and decided "she could do more good" in community politics.[212]

Ethel Wilson retired from politics in 1971 at the age of sixty-nine after losing her provincial seat in the 1971 electoral sweep by Conservative Peter Lougheed. The fact that the Lougheed government did not bother to actively seek the support of labour suggests that Ethel Wilson's successful political career was at least in part shaped by packing union power in Alberta between the 1940s and the 1960s when the Manning government felt compelled to include some labour representation. By the 1970s, as Jack Masson and Peter Blaikie have argued, labour had become largely irrelevant.[213]

Conclusion

The postwar framework for labour relations in Canada and the system of national pattern bargaining in the meatpacking industry affected the progressive impulse that emerged within Edmonton's packing community in contradictory ways. This labour relations infrastructure put in place legal strictures and democratic internal union practices that gave ordinary packing workers unprecedented opportunities to effect change, yet also tended to produce an authoritarian and confrontational leadership style at the local level that often stymied progressive policies aimed at gender equality, labour movement involvement and political activism. This "heroic" manly working-class ideal, which dominated the shop floor and the union hall, came up against a modern white-collar image of respectable male trade unionism that tended to dominate higher levels of the union as the centralized system of bargaining, and grievance and arbitration infrastructure, became more bureaucratic and

[212] "Ethel Wilson," *Edmonton Journal*, 3 October.
[213] Masson, "Labour Politics in Alberta." 276.

professionalized. During the 1970s in particular, Edmonton packing unionists employed this confrontational image of trade union masculinity to both bargain effectively and to assert their needs by challenging the conservatism of international and national union leaders. They also drew on this white-collar notion of "cooperative" trade union masculinity, however, in strategic historical moments to strengthen their position *vis a vis* management and the conservatism of upper-level union leaders.

Both of these highly masculinist notions of union leadership, however, excluded women. Some women who achieved leadership positions faced intimidation to contain their ambitions, while others were forced to behave in ways that threatened their feminine respectability. As a result, most Edmonton packing women avoided leadership roles in their union local and in the labour movement more broadly. The dominant notions of packinghouse masculinity and femininity shaped union priorities in ways that privileged the job security, contract gains, and leadership opportunities of male workers while limiting those of women.

During the postwar decades Edmonton's packinghouse community formed one of the most distinctive working-class districts in Alberta electorally, even though it did not have much political impact at any level of government. Despite the anti-communist hysteria generated by the provincial government of Ernest Manning the packinghouse community produced one of the few working-class politicians to achieve significant stature. Ethel Wilson rose from city councilor to become a cabinet minister in the provincial government in the 1960s by downplaying her labour credentials and capitalizing on the image she projected as a respectable Anglo-Canadian woman. Gendering the politics of Edmonton's packinghouse district reveals the restricted space within which one of the most powerful

segments of Alberta's postwar labour movement could operate. It was an arena where the hyper-masculinity of male packing leaders could have little play, despite the union's strong economic leverage. Instead, much to the chagrin of local and provincial union leaders, Ethel Wilson's charismatic personality, exemplary reputation for protecting those who were "picked on," and the pride she inspired in packing workers as "one of their girls," attracted the votes of many to the virulently anti-union Social Credit Party.[214]

[214] Reimer, Interview.

Chapter Eight: Conclusion

"Unpacking Alberta Beef" has drawn attention to the vibrant community of meatpacking workers that emerged in Edmonton as part of the overarching processes of industrialization and urbanization, which swept Alberta and the Canadian West more broadly into the modern era during the early twentieth century. It challenges a conventional wisdom that suggests Alberta's working classes were characterized largely by conservatism and complacency following the collapse of coal mining union power after World War Two. Using a materialist and cultural approach, this social history has examined the community generated by Edmonton's four packinghouses to investigate how intersections of class, gender, and ethnic identities both shaped and limited solidarity and militancy from World War Two until the 1970s. This working-class community helped to establish and sustain a national system of pattern bargaining in Canada's meatpacking industry between 1947 and 1979 that helped secure unprecedented contract gains nationally, particularly in the 1970s. A central objective of this research has been to explain why this important working-class community was unable to have a greater impact within the political realm in Edmonton or Alberta, despite its support for electoral candidates at the municipal and provincial level. I argue that notions of gender intersected with class and ethnicity to influence their political impact in ways that have not been acknowledged. In particular, an aggressive image of packing masculinity increased the economic leverage of male unionized workers in confrontations with capital, but disadvantaged them in electoral contests. Conversely, as an Anglo-Canadian seamstress in the Laundry Department of the Burns plant, Ethel Wilson was able to achieve remarkable electoral success at the municipal and provincial level by

downplaying her trade union membership and cultivating an image of respectable Alberta femininity.

This study of Edmonton meat packing workers contributes to a small but growing literature on the lives of unionized men and particularly women in Canada during the postwar decades. The era of national pattern bargaining marked the first time most packing workers could achieve something approaching a middle-class standard of living. The wage gains achieved by packing workers rippled throughout the community. Few families that lived in Edmonton for much of the period from 1947 when national pattern bargaining was put in place, until 1979 when the system began to collapse, were untouched by the decent wages earned in local packinghouses. In addition to working-class households, which were dependent on the plants, many middle-class families benefited from the union wages their sons and daughters earned as summer students, which helped put their children through university without debt.

This research also challenges a monolithic image of Alberta as a right-wing province by exploring how one group of unionized Canadian workers responded to an equal rights discourse conveyed through their American-based union. Many local packing workers were influenced by the democratic and egalitarian principles of their industrial union, the United Packinghouse Workers of America (UPWA). The rank and file in this American-based union used its power to pursue socially progressive policies in the United States, particularly racial equality and, to a lesser extent, equal rights for women. In Edmonton, union membership helped reinforce a sense of entitlement and self respect in many workers derived from their role as producers. The era of industrial unionism and centralized bargaining also "awakened" the social conscience of a core group of Edmonton packing unionists and their families,

which had an impact in the larger community. These packing unionists strove to develop Alberta's labour movement, to educate themselves and other unionists about the political economy of industrial capitalism, and to promote political activism. They built a credit union in each packinghouse, formed a small housing co-operative, sponsored many community groups and actively engaged in electoral politics to promote a collectivist working-class perspective aimed at improving the lives of all workers. Edmonton union locals supported meatpacking industry candidates who ran under the banner of the Canadian Commonwealth Cooperative and its successor, the New Democratic Party.

During World War Two a particularly vicious battle between craft and industrial unionists in Edmonton created opportunity for Communists and women to achieve influence. There was more rank and file support in Edmonton packinghouses for reducing inequities of class, however, than those rooted in race or gender, compared to the United States where African-Americans, who represented a much larger proportion of packing workers in key plants, were crucial to pressing UPWA's anti-racism campaign. This racial diversity also sparked gender activism because African-American packing women were more quick to apply the principle of egalitarianism to their experience of gender oppression than women who identified as white. Although the proportion of women workers in Edmonton packinghouses was quite similar to that in the United States (and in other Canadian packinghouses, for that matter), and there was some ethnic diversity, the female workforce was almost entirely white throughout the era of national pattern bargaining. The city's ongoing economic boom created pressure for wage increases but dominant patriarchal and racist social values continued to subordinate women and to marginalize those seen as non-white. Yet Edmonton workers provided vital support for the Canadian union district's early

agenda to raise the wages of the lowest paid workers more than those of other workers, to establish consistent job rates in packinghouses throughout the country, and to eliminate geographic wage differentials between plants in different regions. The predominance of a male breadwinner ideal among packing workers and their union leaders, however, reinforced the subordination of women workers.

This study of unionized women workers in the Canadian meatpacking industry reinforces the findings of other researchers by demonstrating that many women were strongly committed to wage labour, that earning a wage became an important source of self confidence, and, at least for some, enhanced their power within the household. It also affirms, however, that women were uniquely disadvantaged in the workplace by a gender division of labour and racial exclusion. Yet those who got jobs developed female cultures of both resistance and accommodation to strengthen their workplace claims, which were always more tenuous than men's. Although union seniority provided a greater degree of job security, most workers still lived with the threat of layoff, and women workers were affected disproportionately because for many years local union leaders refused to enforce a single seniority list for male and female workers. By the 1960s industry restructuring using new equipment and processes began to eliminate more of the jobs considered "female" than those considered "male." A gendered wage differential had been eliminated by 1971, but the gender division of labour, which allocated the most skilled and highly paid jobs to men, persisted, and women workers continued to occupy the lowest paid jobs. A rough masculinist culture on the shop floor protected male jobs by making it difficult for women to leave female-dominated departments.

Packing women crafted a distinctive identity as industrious and highly competent workers to strengthen their claim to packing jobs. Most women chose to avoid the often uncomfortable and emotionally hostile environments of male-dominated departments, even after they were granted equal pay and the opportunity to work in non-traditional jobs in 1971. Working in female-dominated areas of the packinghouse they often built strong female friendships, which made their work environment more meaningful or simply helped to pass the time. Women workers did not experience the same degree of legitimacy as wage workers or of job security as men, nevertheless, they quickly embraced the new grievance system and successfully pressed equality claims that placed them in the forefront of trade union feminism in Alberta. They succeeded in overturning a discriminatory marriage bar, and secured the right to unlimited maternity leaves by the 1960s. With the backing of Alberta's Human Rights Commission in the 1970s, married women won paid benefits coverage on the same basis as male workers and forced companies to adhere to a single seniority list.

The fact that Edmonton packing women were less able to come together to press their workplace claims than women in several other Canadian industries reinforces feminist analyses that emphasize the importance of workplace and union infrastructure to facilitate networking. Lacking this their activism remained isolated and episodic. Some of the most activist women who worked in different local packinghouses never met. Lack of sustained networking infrastructure within the union, the labour movement and government, together with the disproportionate responsibility women workers bore for child care and housework, limited their opportunities for establishing an organization to advocate for working women. More generally, Alberta's social and political conservatism acted as a significant constraint. Viewed within this larger context, however, it is possible to see more clearly that the

grassroots activism of Edmonton packing women was an important, but largely unacknowledged force, that helped open greater workplace opportunities for successive generations of women workers in Alberta.

Class and gender also conditioned the household economies and community politics of packing families during the interwar and postwar eras in ways that reveal both continuity and change. This research builds on a very limited scholarly literature on urban Alberta to offer a glimpse of the transition of one working-class community from semi-rural to urban, and finally to suburban. It also reinforces the view that a holistic approach to studying working-class families that looks closely at the connections between the workplace and the household yields a much better understanding of the factors that foster and limit working-class consciousness, solidarity and militancy. Throughout both periods few working-class packing families could survive on one income, even a male union wage after World War Two. The unpaid and paid labour of women in the home remained vital, with many wives taking in babysitting or sewing in the home to supplement a male wage.

One significant change, however, was a growing diversity of household economies. By the 1970s a greater number of packing households were supported by a sole-support female breadwinner because more women workers chose not to marry or were separated or divorced. In addition, more married women began to earn wages outside the home by the 1960s and 70s, occasionally earning more than a male partner. A higher degree of economic security combined with an expanded education system to allow the children of most packing workers to stay in school longer. The monetary value attached to women's more visible economic contribution appeared to give them more say in the household economy. Yet most women continued to accept most of the responsibility for unpaid domestic labour and

childcare, although some with increasing resentment by the 1970s and 80s. Male workers most often confined themselves to masculinized household tasks. This gendered arrangement, together with the growing number of women working outside the home, made it more difficult for women workers to get involved in the union, which weakened working-class cohesion. Increasing numbers of women were able to support themselves and their children on a packing wage through informal arrangements, and a few became extraordinarily committed to the union as the most effective vehicle for increasing their economic security. A variety of needs, but particularly the desire for greater financial security, prompted a number of workers to maintain their connection to farming, take on extra jobs, or put their energy into saving and investing, which limited their interest in and commitment to community or union activism.

Throughout the period unionized packing jobs in Edmonton also remained the preserve of Anglo-Canadian and Canadian-born or immigrant Europeans, mainly from Eastern, Central, and Southern Europe, most often the Ukraine, Poland, and Germany. This study is one of the few to explore the lives of urban working-class Albertans of East European, particularly Ukrainian heritage. Workers of colour, particularly black women, were largely excluded from the packinghouse by company hiring practices and were often marginalized by workers who self-identified as white. There is very limited evidence of local packing unionists actively fighting racial or ethnic discrimination in the workplace or the community.

One of this study's major scholarly contributions is to the historical field of Canadian masculinities. It builds on the work of Christopher Dummitt, R.W. Connell, and others, to explore the perspectives and strategies of packing management figures. I argue that the

system of national pattern bargaining that dominated this era was a highly masculinist construct shaped by a dominant notion of white Anglo middle-class masculinity, which celebrated rationalism, control, the use of technologies, emotional restraint, and patriarchal values. Throughout the early and mid-twentieth century the male captains of Canada's meatpacking industry crafted masculine identities that were distinctively modern in their quest for industrial success. This brand of Canadian masculinity was particularly dominant in the "high modern" era of the 1940s and 50s, before being contested on a number of fronts in the 1960s and 70s.

The new union environment of postwar Edmonton packinghouses threatened the social authority of local male management figures. An elaborate grievance and arbitration system placed greater limits on their ability to make arbitrary decisions to control a more assertive work force and achieve the production efficiencies prized by their superiors. With centralized bargaining conducted by national executives at a head office 3,000 miles away, local managers played a more limited role in determining terms of work, particularly wage rates, yet by the 1960s the tethers of national office control had tightened as the companies responded to intense American competition. The logistics of negotiations in the centralized system of bargaining also created an unusual degree of gender alignment between local male management and union leaders, reducing class distance in new ways. This made it more important but also more difficult to maintain the social distance that was key to their status as middle-class men when many of them did not earn as much as unionized men. The result was the sometimes harsh treatment of lower level management figures, particularly front line foremen, who upper management could verbally abuse with more impunity than unionized workers.

Membership in a powerful industrial union during the era of national pattern bargaining helped foster a distinctive notion of packing masculinity as dignified and self-respecting, yet also tough and decisive. These aspects of identity were central to how many male packinghouse workers in Edmonton -- the majority of them Canadian-born immigrants of East Europeans or immigrants, most often Ukrainian -- understood their subjectivity as working-class men and proud unionists. It is how they distinguished themselves from women and from people of colour. This brand of masculinity, enhanced by the much-vaunted ability of male workers to endure a harsh work environment, helped workers secure major gains in shop floor confrontations and at the bargaining table. But the need to stand up to the boss also meant that many male workers could be rough and dictatorial. Valuing these qualities increased tolerance for domineering and abusive behaviour that ranged from profanity and intimidating or humiliating initiation rites, to harassment and physical brawls. On the shop floor and in the union hall these manly discourses and behaviours, which could be sexist, ethnically charged, or homophobic, conflicted with the democratic, egalitarian, and socially progressive values of the union. They had a corrosive effect that limited class solidarity and the union's social justice mandate by subordinating women and reinforcing ethnic and other divisions.

In class confrontations with male managers and government officials local union leaders mobilized both rough and respectable notions of working-class masculinity, depending on the particularities of a historical moment. They were quick to assert their rational, fact-based grievances and arguments, but were willing to use profanity, aggressive physical posturing, and emotional outbursts in ways that contrasted starkly with the rational professionalism and self-control that characterized the Anglo-Canadian middle-class

masculine norm. By the 1970s a growing divergence between the more confrontational masculinity of local union leaders and a brand of masculine leadership at top levels of the union that was more like management, created new internal tensions that eroded Edmonton workers' confidence in and respect for their national and international union leadership.

The goals of more progressive union activists in Edmonton packinghouses were often stymied by the rough masculinist culture of the shop floor and the union hall. The presence of a well-organized conservative faction of Anglo male craft unionists embittered by the triumph of industrial unionism acted as another brake on the progressive impulse. Workers tended to support aggressive, even bullying and dictatorial union leaders because these men were seen as most effective in confronting the members of Canada's powerful meatpacking oligopoly. A number of these union leaders stunted the initiatives of activist workers who tried to promote union education, political action, and the rights of women workers. A key example is Burns seamstress Ethel Wilson, a charismatic and effective unionist who became vice president of the Burns local, held positions in Edmonton's labour movement, and represented Canadian packing women at the union's international convention in 1947.

Gender was a key factor shaping Ethel Wilson's career path. She was shut out of union leadership by prevailing assumptions about female passivity and male aggressiveness. Wilson, who was passionate about women's rights, was also handicapped by the reinscription of patriarchal gender norms after World War Two, which undercut the support of male workers for women's equal right to jobs, wages, benefits and union positions. Viewed through the prism of class and gender, Wilson's decision to shift her efforts for change from the labour movement to community politics make sense, particularly when she achieved greater electoral success than any other Alberta packing worker -- male or female. This

electoral success allowed Wilson to develop institutions that gave girls and women more support in the community. She likely felt that these organizations would better prepare and enable women to participate in the political process, which, as a woman who came of age during Alberta women's struggle for female suffrage, Wilson valued highly.

The political impact of Edmonton's packing community was also profoundly affected by the particularities of class, gender, and ethnicity in Alberta during the decades of unprecedented economic expansion and urban growth that followed World War Two. Many packing workers were alienated from a political system that systematically marginalized them. Their political engagement around class was also limited by competing identities, particularly ethnicity and region. These factors constrained the efforts of political activists within Edmonton's packinghouse community. But this study has also revealed that the hyper-masculine image of male packing workers, which was so effective on the shop floor and in labour negotiations, became a liability on the political stage. An image of male-dominated organized labour as uncontrolled and dangerous, which Alberta's Social Credit government fomented with particular virulence, together with the tight control of an Anglo-dominated middle-class elite over local media and the political process, posed an insurmountable barrier to the electoral success of male packing workers.

Using the analytic lenses of gender, class, and ethnicity, this research deepens our understanding of Ethel Wilson's decisions and career trajectory. Her electoral success can be understood in part as a factor of her highly gendered and racialized image as a white, Anglo-Alberta woman with family roots in the province's rural pioneering past. Wilson was able to gain credibility by downplaying her trade union affiliation and instead appealing to voters as representative of the province's maternal feminist tradition. Wilson's own motivations can

also be attributed to this highly gendered and class-specific historical context, which limited the opportunity for her to press women's needs within a highly masculinized packing union environment during the postwar decades.

This study of Edmonton packing workers during the era of national pattern bargaining provides valuable historical context for understanding Alberta's meatpacking industry, an industry that remains vital to its economy because of the province's extensive grazing lands. Since 1979, when the first packinghouse shut down in Edmonton, the provincial government's generous corporate subsidies and anti-labour stance have attracted the investment of giant international food conglomerates, which have built massive feedlots and slaughterhouses in rural communities where land is cheap and labour is less receptive to unions. Ian MacLachlan's research on the transformation of Canada's beef industry in the late twentieth century, which documents the development of factory-style animal feedlots and the dramatic expansion of slaughter capacity in Alberta packing plants, makes clear the direction in which this industry is headed.[1199]

Unlike many of Canada's other manufacturing industries, it seems unlikely that the beef slaughter and processing industry will be moved off-shore any time soon.[1200] A number of scholars have emphasized the problems these transformations in the Canadian meat-producing industry have created. Joel Novek's work demonstrates that intensification of the labour process in non-union or weakly unionized Canadian packinghouses following restructuring has sparked a parallel increase in workplace injuries.[1201] At the same time, an

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[1199] The average number of cattle slaughtered weekly rose from 3,000 to 23,000 head of cattle between 1987 and 1998. MacLachlan, *Kill and Chill*. 287

[1200] Steven C. High, *Industrial Sunset: The Making of North America's Rust Belt, 1969-1984* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003).

[1201] Novek, "The Labour Process."

article by Michael Broadway has highlighted the enormous social costs borne by the rural Alberta communities where these packinghouses have located, which are ill-equipped to meet the needs of large numbers of Canadian migrants and immigrants arriving to work in the plants.[1202]

These issues point to the need for more research into the lives of those who labour in Canadian packinghouses, particularly those in Alberta where the government has not been very responsive to worker concerns. Although there has been some attention paid to organized meatpacking labour in the immediate postwar years, a study that examines the national level of the union beyond 1964 would provide valuable context for other local studies of this important Canadian manufacturing industry. One of my overarching purposes has been to document the agency of Edmonton packing workers during an era of relative labour strength. In doing so I have tried to reveal historically specific class-based and racialized notions of gender and the processes by which they were produced, thereby helping to illuminate power dynamics in an industrialized capitalist society. The study also suggests that notions of trade unionism were mobilized in contradictory ways, at times reinscribing class, race, and gender hierarchies that ultimately undermined working-class strength. Finally, this research underlines the need for historians who examine the relationships and institutions of organized labour and business to rigorously interrogate the ways in which classed and racialized notions of gender, both femininity and masculinity, are invoked to influence relations of power in the workplace, but also in the union, the household, and the political realm.

[1202] Broadway, "Here's the Beef."

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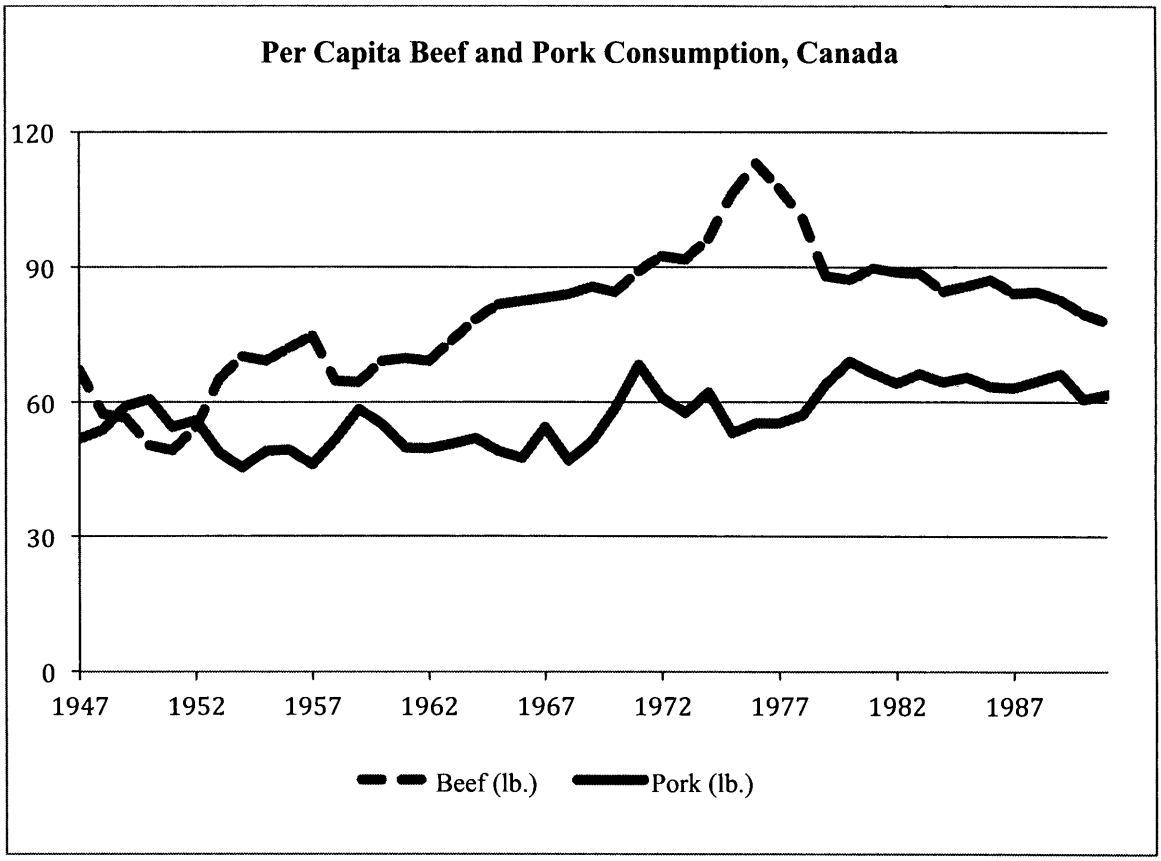
Table 1

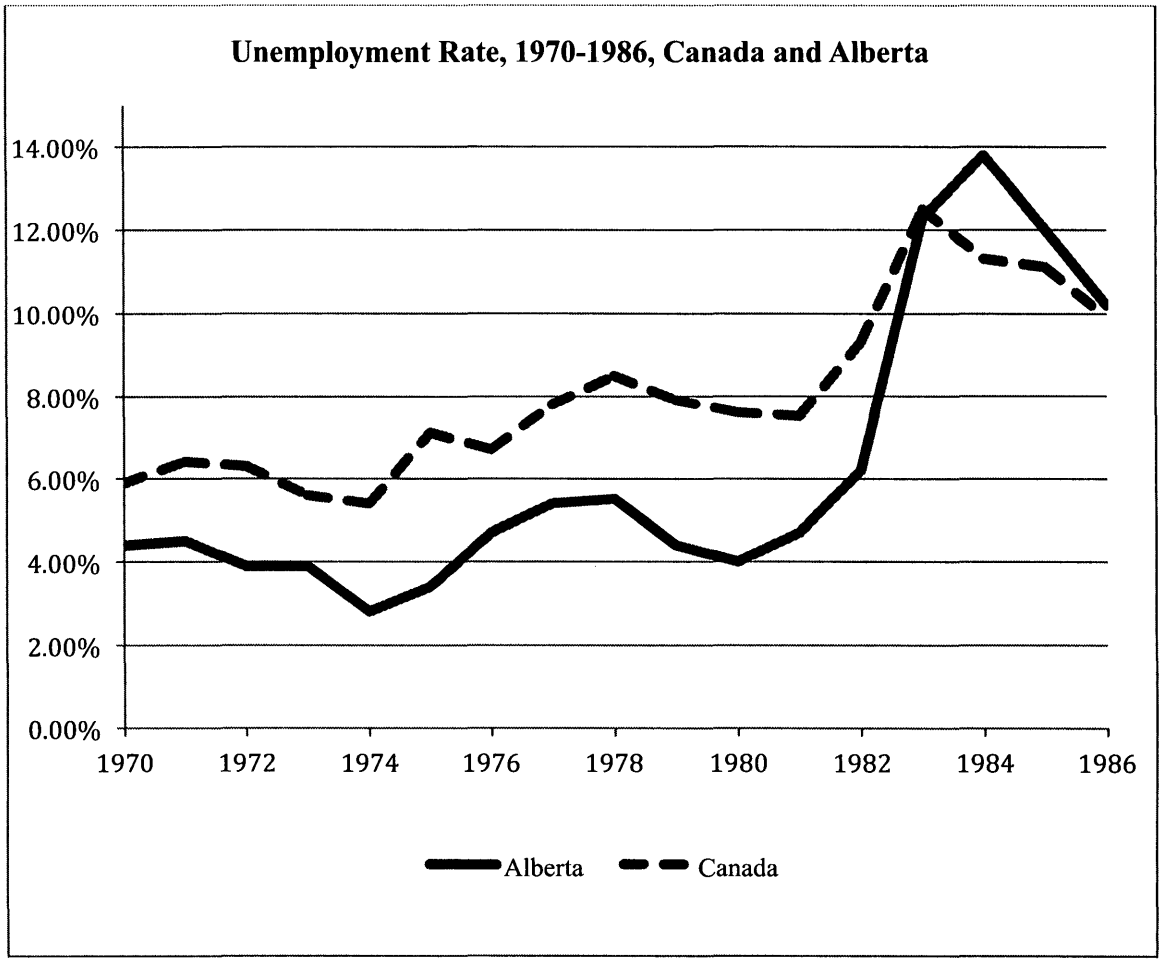
Source: Canada, Department of Labour, *Wage Rates, Salaries, and Hours of Labour*, 1947-1983; *Consumer Prices and Price Indexes* series 62-010. Average meatpacking wages from 1974-1979 are for Edmonton because Canadian figures were not available.

Table 2



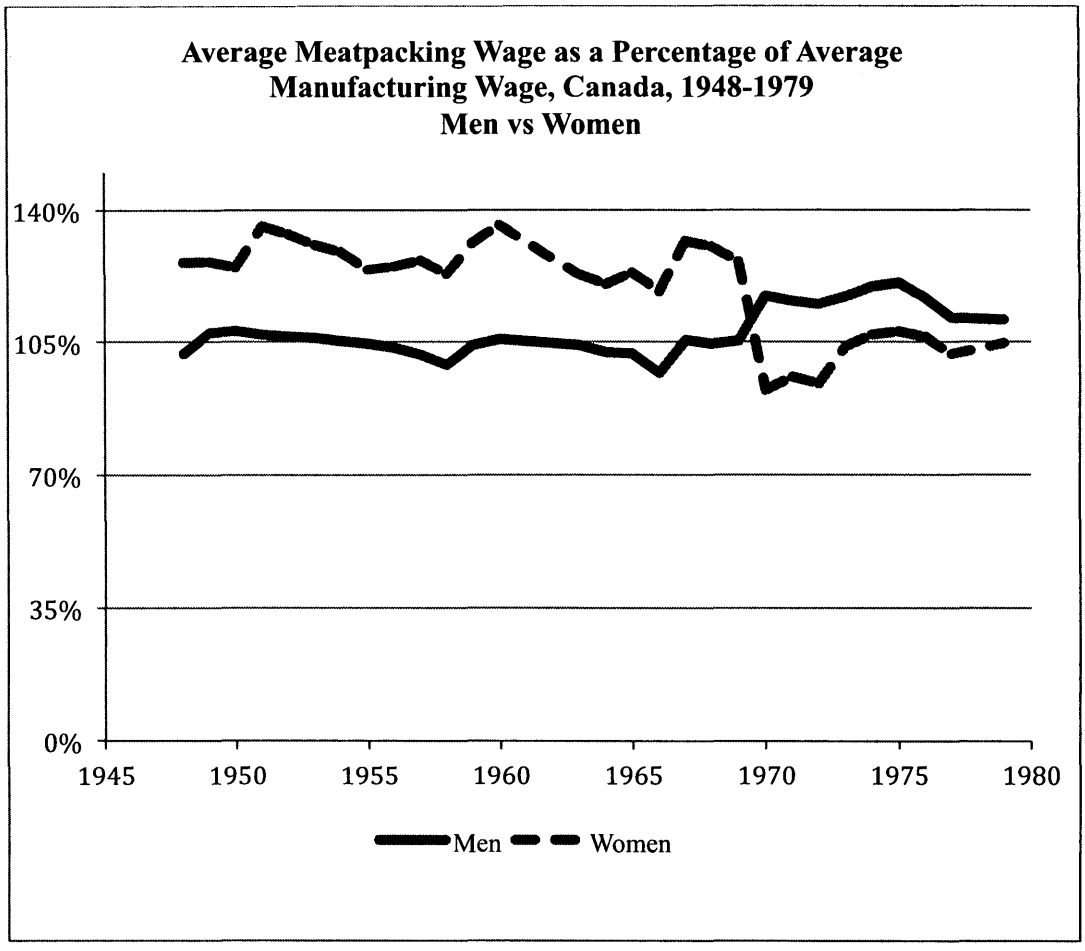
Source: Statistics Canada, *Livestock & Animal Products* Cat. 23-203. 1947-1991.

Table 3



Sources: *Historical Statistics of Canada*, Series D491-497, unemployment rates for Canada and regions, annual averages, 1970-1975. Statistics Canada, *The Labour Force*, Alberta, Cat. 71-001 (seasonally adjusted), 1976-1986. *CANSIM*, Canadian Unemployment Rate, D980745 (seasonally adjusted), 1976-1986.

Table 4



Source: Manufacturing wage data from *Canada Yearbook*; Statistics Canada, *General Review of the Manufacturing Industries of Canada*, 31-201 and *Historical Statistics of Canada*, Table E60-61, 1948-1969. It represents all manufacturing, durable and non-durable.

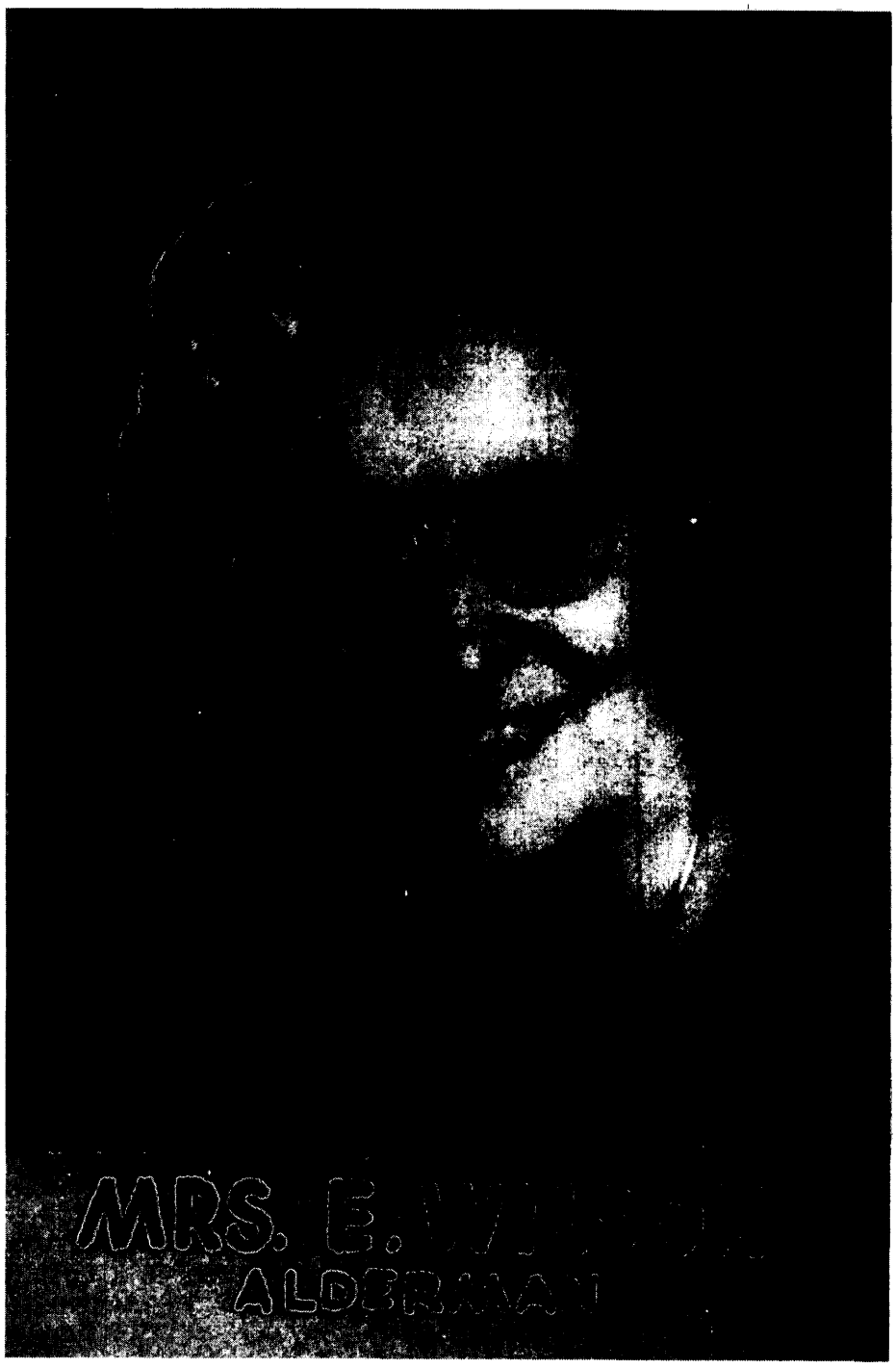


Figure 1 - Ethel Wilson, Edmonton city council photo, circa early 1950s. (Source: City of Edmonton Archives EA-10-2934.5)

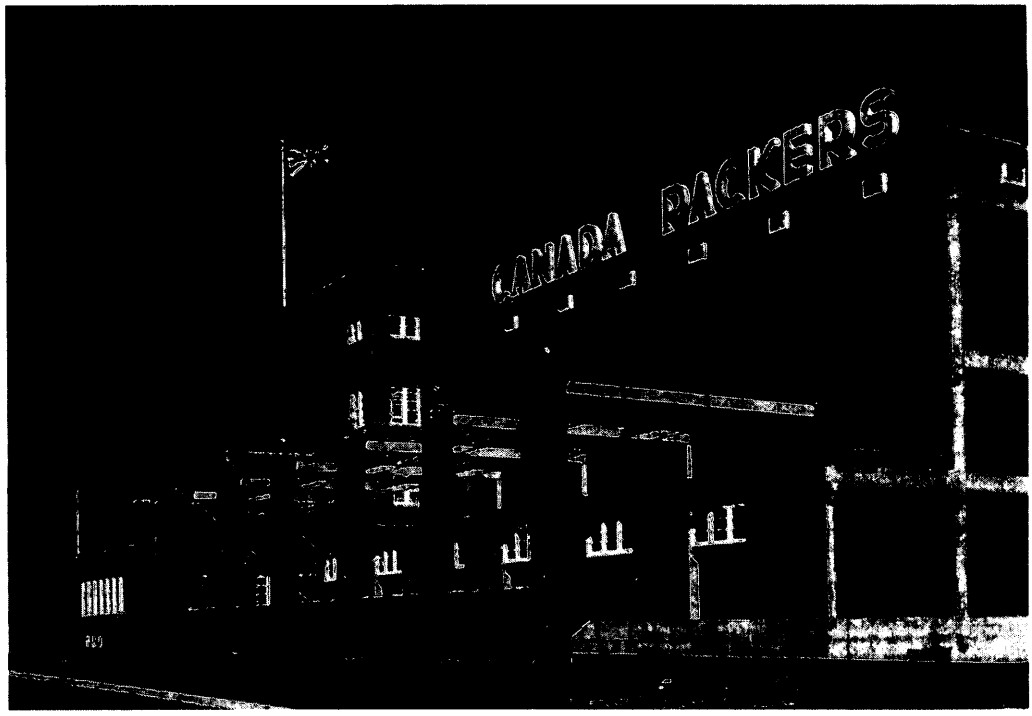


Figure 2 – Canada Packers plant, Edmonton, 1937. (Source: *Royal Architectural Institute of Canada Journal*, 1937 Vol 14 (2): 158)

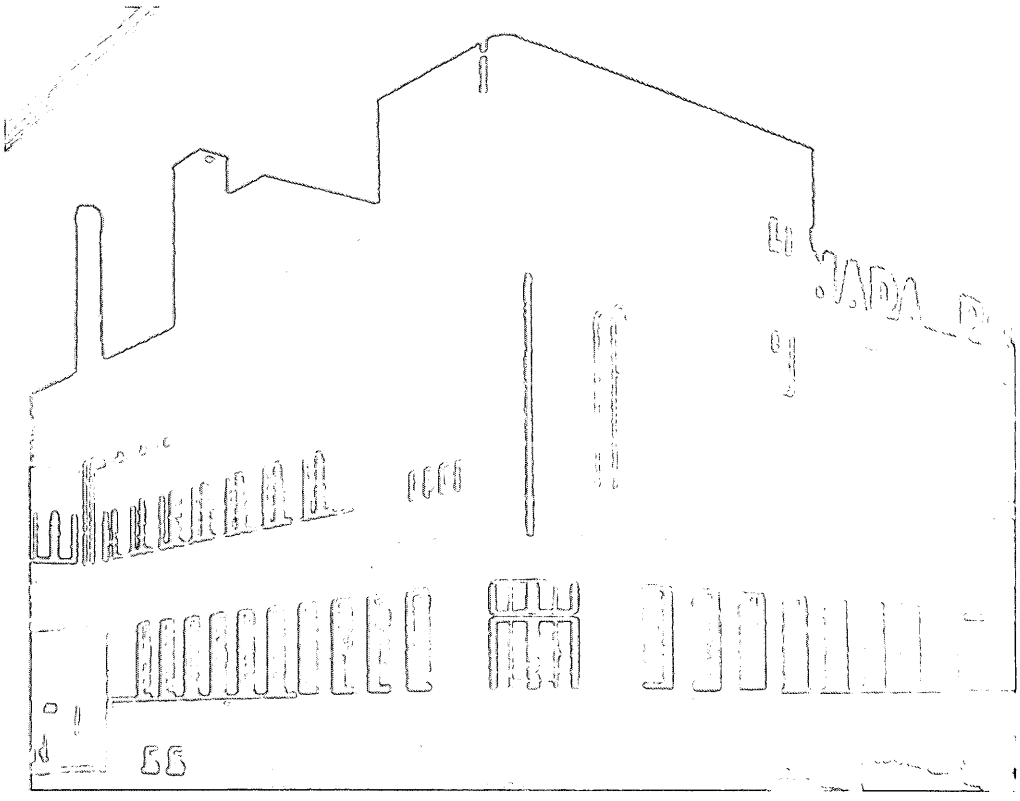


Figure 3 – Office entrance to Canada Packers plant, Edmonton (Source: *Royal Architectural Institute of Canada Journal*, 1937, Vol 14 (2): 160)

Figure 4 - Canada Packers plant, front office, 1941. (Source: Provincial Archives of Alberta, BL.361/11)

Figure 5 - Beef Kill Floor, Canada Packers plant, Edmonton, 1952. (Source: Provincial Archives of Alberta, BL.1976/1)

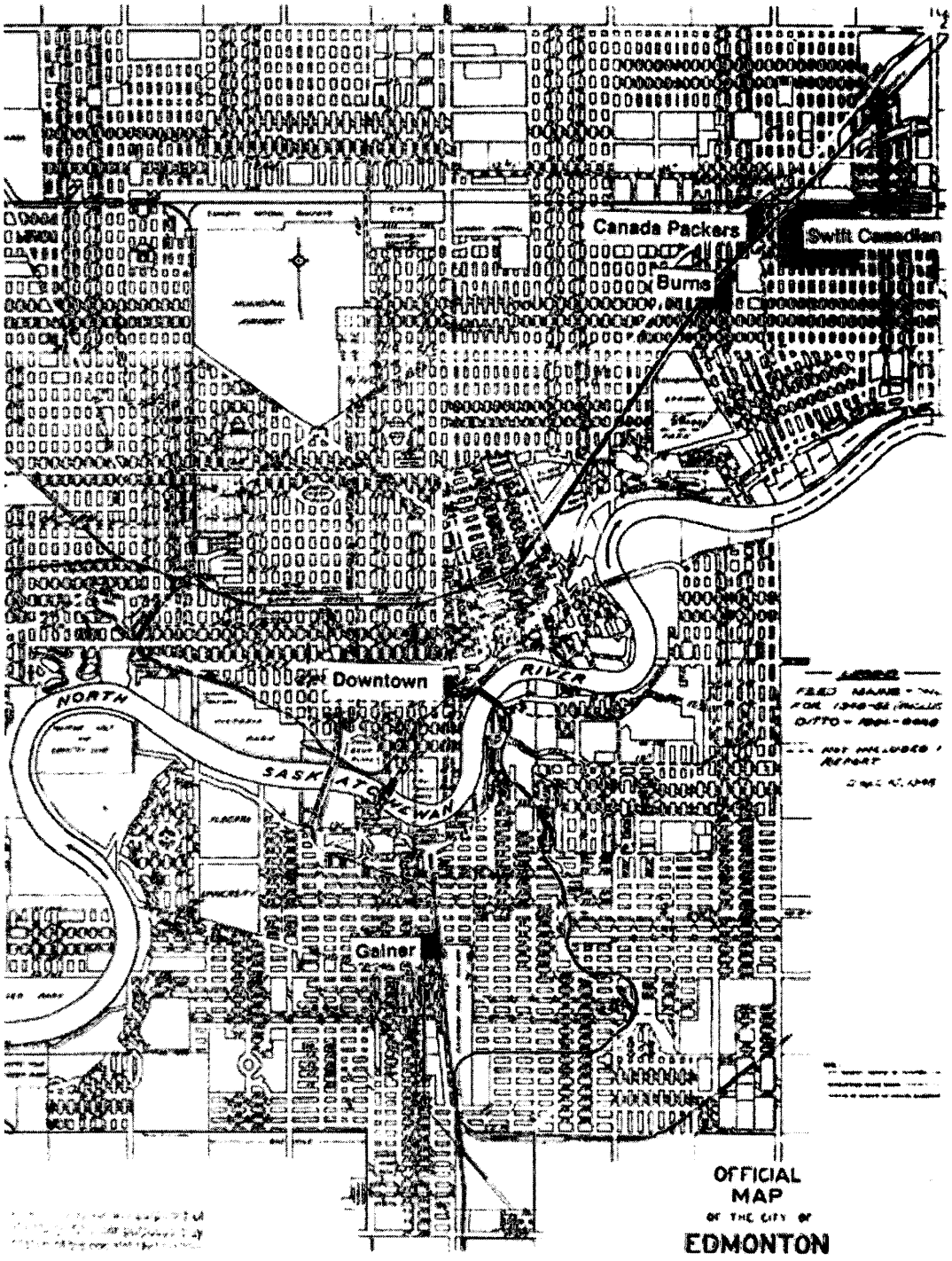


Figure 6 - Map of Edmonton, 1945. (Source: North Edmonton Industrial Review, City of Edmonton Archives EAM-11)

Figure 7 - Canada Packers plant, Edmonton, 1950. (Source: Provincial Archives of Alberta, PA.1623/1)

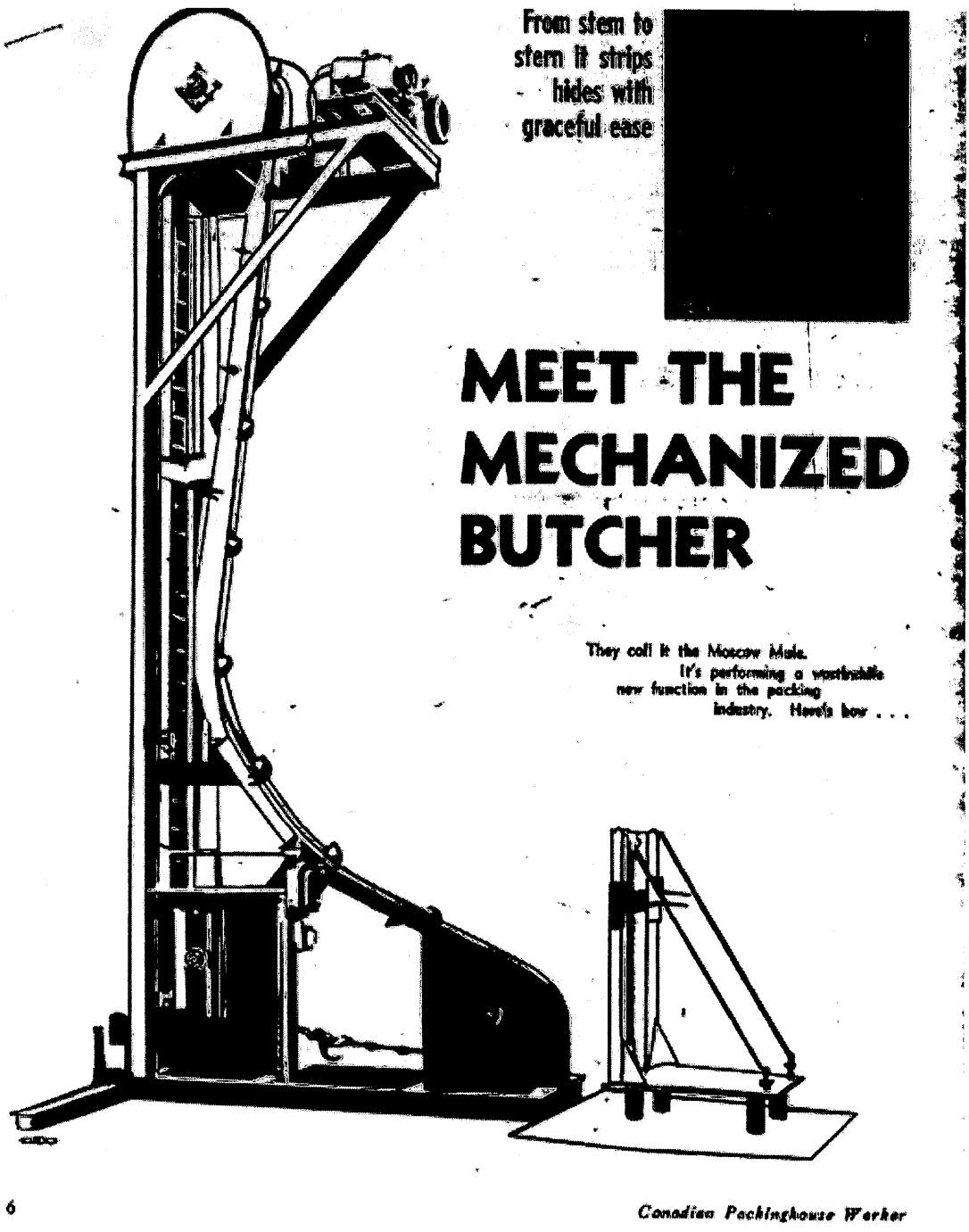
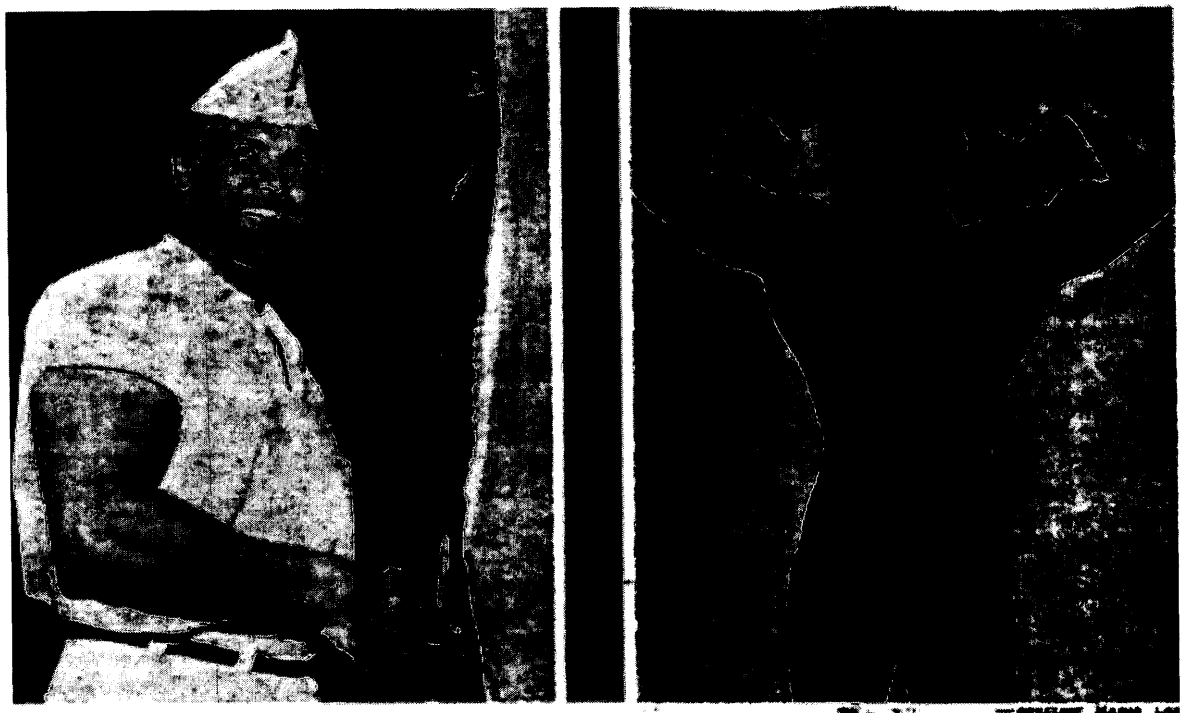


Figure 8 – The automatic hide-puller. (Source: *Canadian Packinghouse Worker*, June 1963, courtesy of UFCW Canada)

Figure 9 - Canada Packers workers on strike, July 20, 1966, Edmonton. (Source: J.18 Provincial Archives of Alberta)

Figure 10 - Final union certification vote at Canada Packers, Edmonton, September 11, 1944. (Source: Provincial Archives of Alberta, BL.791/1)



MR. CANADA

MICHAEL GALEA of Canada Packers Toronto plant is built like a well designed concrete blockhouse. He has muscles on muscles.

This year the world's body-building fraternity met at Montreal and after the last biceps had been flexed and the final posture assumed, Michael emerged as "Mr. Canada," the Canadian male with the best set of muscles and the finest over-all physical development.

With the national title now behind him, Michael has pinned his aspirations to the 1968 "Mr. Universe" contest to be held in Paris or London.

"I won't be disappointed if I don't win in my first attempt," confides the Local 114 member.

"I weigh 198 pounds. I feel I must gain at least 15 pounds of well-placed muscle if I'm to have a chance," he says with a wry grin.

Putting this kind of muscle on his already superbly-knit frame means a great deal of work and considerable expense. "Lunch alone costs me $1.75 every day because I must have food with lots of protein — steak, eggs, chicken and a special protein supplement I get from the States," he says.

The toughest grind is constant exercising.

"These muscles represent 10 years of gym work," he told a reporter after winning the Mr. Canada title. Michael defines "gym work" as two, or 2¼ hours of weight lifting and calisthenics daily — except during preparation for competition, then the workout is one hour longer.

Figure 11 - Mr. Canada. (Source: *Canadian Packinghouse Worker*, December 1967, p.5, courtesy of UFCW Canada)

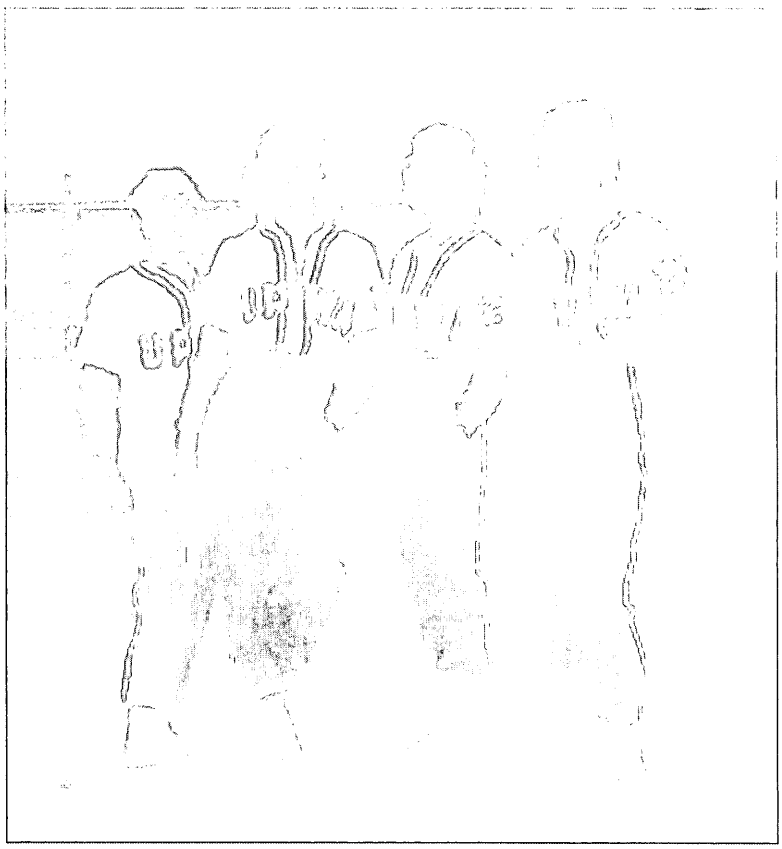
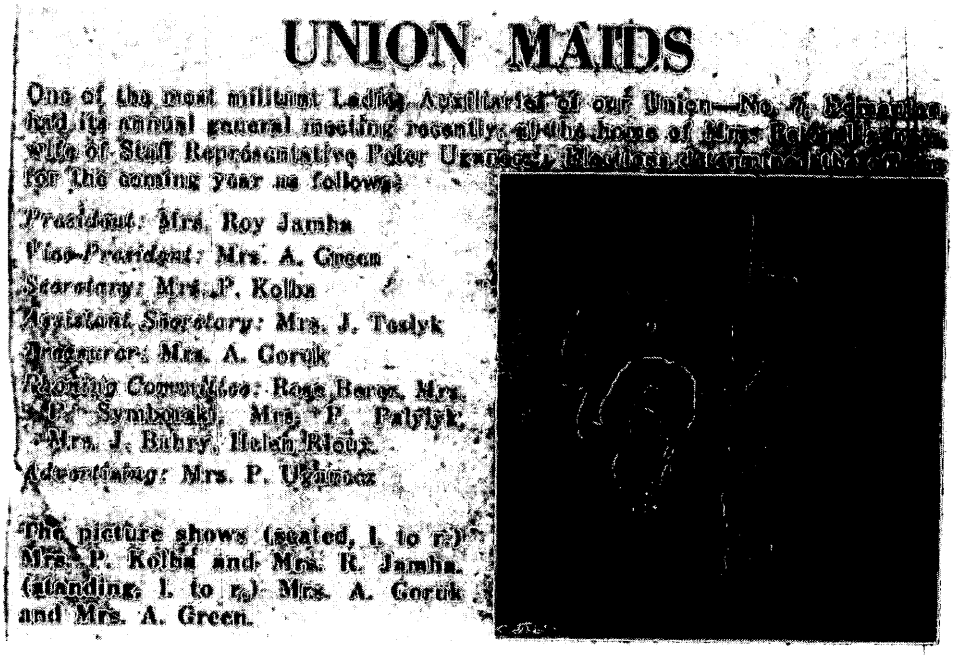


Figure 12 - Gloria Kereliuk, second from the left, with three female co-workers in their union baseball uniform, Edmonton, 1959. (Source: Photograph courtesy of Gloria Kereliuk)

UPWA Women's Auxiliary No. 7 in Edmonton receives its charter. Left to right: District Secretary Iona Somis; Representative Hampson; Treasurer Ella Goruk; President Gloria Blonsky; Secretary Helen Rioux and Vice-President Doreen McBride.

Sister Gloria Blonsky reports that UPWA Women's Auxiliary No. 7 in Edmonton held a meeting on Tuesday, May 19th. District Secretary Iona Somis was guest speaker at the meeting and presented the Auxiliary with its charter. She congratulated them on the pioneer work they were doing in women's activities and urged them to work closely with the local unions. Coffee was served after the meeting and movies shown.

Figure 13 - *Canadian Packinghouse Worker*, May 1959. (News clipping courtesy of Gloria Kereliuk, née Blonsky)



UNION MAIDS

One of the most militant Ladies' Auxiliaries of our Union—No. 7, Edmonton, held its annual general meeting recently at the home of Mrs. [illegible] wife of Staff Representative Peter Ugrinec. [illegible] for the coming year as follows:

President: Mrs. Roy Jamha
Vice-President: Mrs. A. Green
Secretary: Mrs. P. Kolba
Assistant Secretary: Mrs. J. Toulyk
Treasurer: Mrs. A. Goruk
Steering Committee: Rose Berge, Mrs. P. Symbonak, Mrs. P. Palylyk, Mrs. J. Bahry, Helen Rioux
Advertising: Mrs. P. Ugrinec

The picture shows (seated, l. to r.) Mrs. P. Kolba and Mrs. R. Jamha. (standing, l. to r.) Mrs. A. Goruk and Mrs. A. Green.

Figure 14 - *Canadian Packinghouse Worker*, January/February 1961. (Source: News clipping courtesy of Jenny Kolba)

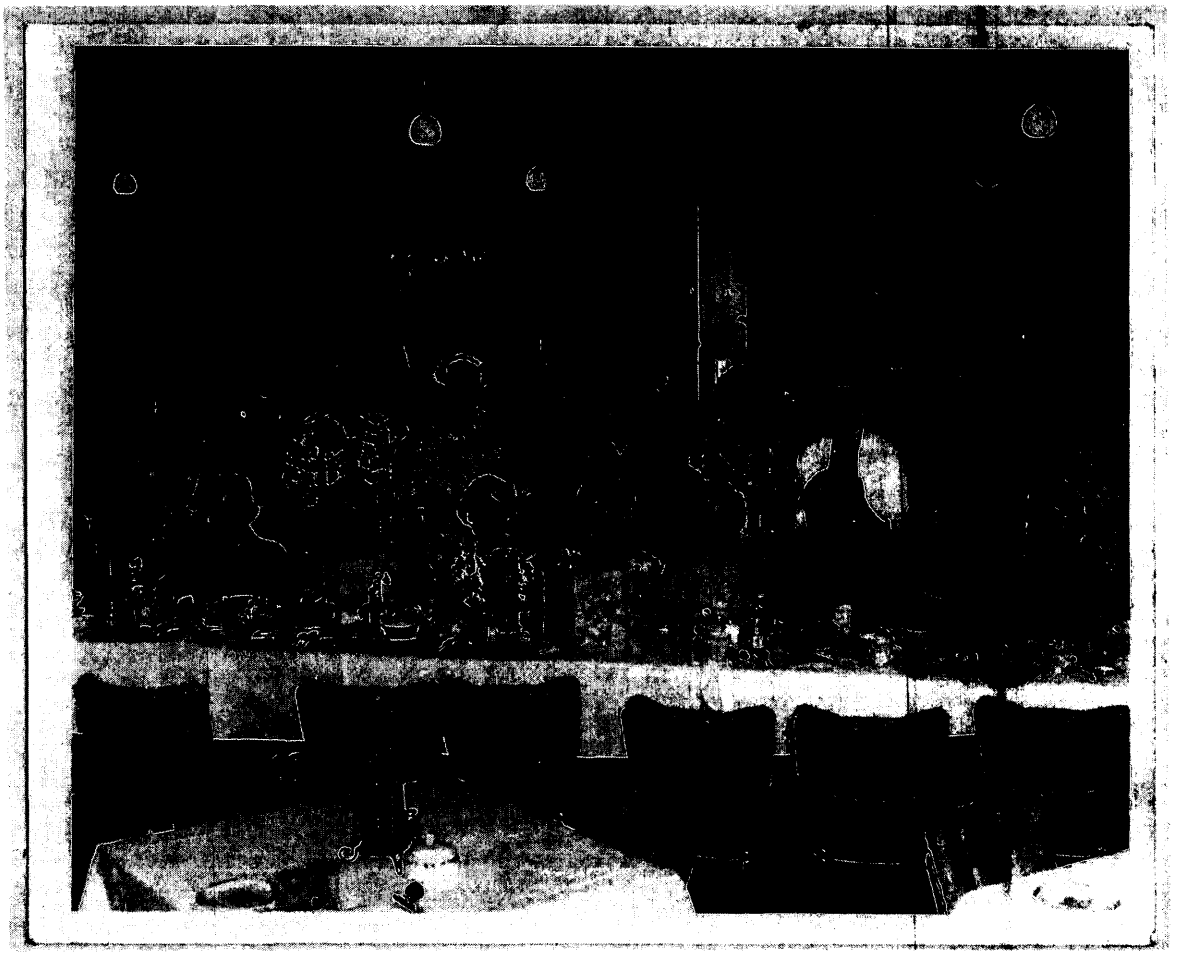
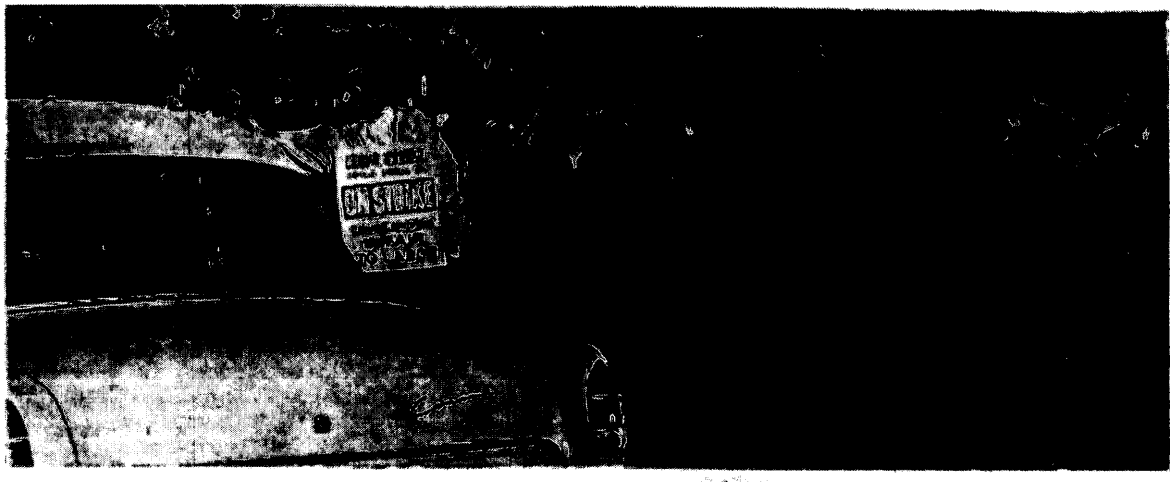


Figure 15 - A wedding shower for Gloria Kereliuk (neé Blonsky) in 1959 organized by women in the Pork Trim Department at Edmonton's Swift plant. The dinner was held in a local restaurant. Gloria is third from the left, standing. (Source: Photograph courtesy of Gloria Kereliuk)

Figure 16 - Key local organizers and union officials pose with national UPWA director Fred Dowling (far left, standing) following successful union certification vote. Henry Tomaschuk, who played a prominent role in the Canada Packers local as Recording Secretary, is second from the left standing. I was unable to identify any other people in the photograph. Canada Packers, Edmonton, September, 1944. (Source: Provincial Archives of Alberta, BL.791/2)



'Like old times'

By ALEX GORUK, President, Local 243

To many of our members, 7:00 a.m., July 20th, brought back memories stretching back to 1947, for it was 19 years ago when they first carried the strike banner for a determined UPWA membership. Many of those who so militantly marched the line are no longer with us, but in their place, with the same spirit of determination and conviction, is a new breed working, planning and fighting side by side with many of the old veterans.

Our strike is totally effective with pickets and committees operating as efficiently as expected. We appreciate the moral support given us by the Swift, Burns and Gainers locals, their officers and members have walked our picket lines from time to time and are continuing to do so. We want to convey a special "thank you" to the member of Local 230 who walked our picket line followed by four of his children each carrying a banner; to the Gainers local for supplying live music at strike headquarters, and to the Swift local who bought our soup kitchen requirements for the first week of the strike.

To add moral and financial support was a young lad, about 12 years of age, who came to strike headquarters and handed us a $2.00 bill for our strike fund. He did not wish to tell us his name or any other details, just that he was behind us, wished us all the success in this conflict, and with that he left. We have tagged him "Danny", and hope that some day we will find out who Danny really is.

THE PICTURES: TOP—Local 216 (Winnipeg) pickets mill around the car belonging to a CBC news crew getting first-hand information from the strikers. (Photo: Winnipeg Free Press.) MIDDLE—Youth and beauty were added to Local 243's picket line when Brother John Sadovsky brought his daughters to the strike headquarters. BOTTOM—In the back row are members of Local 319 (Gainers, Edmonton) who gave a lift to Local 243's picketers with their lively tunes. Seated are Brothers Cliff Cummings and Paul Glass of Local 243; next to them is Brother Adam Wilkowicki of Local 421 (Calgary) who was on a business holiday.

Figure 17 - The only female picketers in the 1966 national Canada Packers strike.
(Source: *Canadian Packinghouse Worker*, August 1966)

Journal Photo by Dave Reidle

We'll win! Right, dad?

Carrying a picket sign is a heavy burden for any little girl, but Arlene Williams, 2, does it for her daddy. Arlene is the daughter of Rod Williams, president of Local P-233, Canadian Food and Allied Workers Union, who is currently locked out from his job at Burns Foods Ltd.

About 1,800 meat packing workers are locked out in Edmonton by Burns, Canada Packers and Swift Canadian Co. in a dispute over a new contract. Arlene loves to carry the sign and her father says she cries if it is taken away.

Ed

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By DON SELLAR
Southam News Services

OTTAWA — Midway through
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unemployment climbed to 5.5 per
5.3 per cent in April.

And, for the first time in s
number of employed Canadians d
000 from 9,086,000 dur-
ing the previous month.

The jobless rate now stands above the comparable figure of 5.2 per cent for May, 1973, a fact which may be injected into the election campaign in the days ahead.

The unemployment figures, adjusted to allow for seasonal fluctuations in the job market, showed an increase of 23,000 in the number of Canadians looking for work, to 531,000 during the week ended May 18.

Nearly half the increase took place in the 14-24 age group, where the unemployment level stands at 258,000, an increase of 9,000 for the month.

The sharpest increase in the seasonally-adjusted unemployment rate took place in the Atlantic Region—a 1.5-per-cent jump to 10.7 per cent. In Quebec, unemployment rose 0.4 per cent to 7.8.

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Figure 18 - The only female picketer in news coverage of Edmonton workers during the 1974 lock-out. (Source: *Edmonton Journal*, 11 June 1974)

MRS. ETHEL N. WILSON
. . . no change in private life

New Minister Lives In Humble Cottage

By FREDA FITZPATRICK

Figure 19 - Ethel Wilson projected a populist image by emphasizing her farming background and ability to manage on a limited budget. (Source: *Edmonton Journal*, 3 December 1962)

Appendix A: Copyright Permission

Some material in this dissertation has been reproduced from Cynthia Loch-Drake, "'A Special Breed': Packing Men and the Class and Racial Politics of Manly Discourses in Post-1945 Edmonton, Alberta," in *Atlantis: A Women's Studies Journal/Revue d'etudes sur les femmes*, Fall, 2007, pp. 133-143.

Appendix B: Interview Methodology

During the course of this study I interviewed fifty-one people, including workers, union leaders, management, and the wives and children of packing men. This sample was not representative of the packing workforce during the study period because there was a disproportionate number of women workers, workers employed twenty years or more who started before 1965, and workers of Ukrainian heritage. The sample included roughly equal numbers of packing men and women, and ten of the men and three of the women had held executive positions in their packing local. I also interviewed two local foremen, two male white-collar workers, and two senior managers from the national office of two different meatpacking corporations. Important aspects of two workers' lives were reconstructed posthumously using documentary sources and by interviewing one former Swift worker's wife and son.

I recruited participants in part through a list of former packing union members generated by past and current union leaders through UFCW Local 1118 in Edmonton. The union list generated about half of my respondents. To find individuals who were not connected to the union I posted a notice about the study in Edmonton public libraries and in the church bulletin for the Catholic church located closest to North-east Edmonton's packing district. I also tried to achieve a degree of diversity by asking eight ethnic community organizations in Edmonton to publicize the study. Living in Toronto made it more challenging to locate a diversity of interview candidates in Edmonton as I could only be in the city for two research trips. Speaking only one language was also a limitation that narrowed the pool of candidates. Several individuals contacted by telephone said they were uncomfortable being interviewed because of their language

skills. These community efforts generated roughly a quarter of the people interviewed. I found the same number of people again through the snowball technique. One former local union official tried to exclude anti-union foremen and white-collar workers from the study by controlling the list of names I was given to find interview candidates. One of the non-union people I interviewed chose not to participate any further some months after his initial enthusiasm in an interview. I suspect that he heard from someone that I was conducting a union-sponsored study, which confirmed the importance of finding candidates randomly through community notices.

The study was conducted using the principle of informed consent with a written consent form that I explained to each participant before they signed it. Participants chose whether or not to remain anonymous, how freely I could cite information from the interview, and when and how the interview recording could be placed in a public archive. In each case I explained the terms of the study and the various options for each person's participation, emphasizing their right to have the recording device turned off or to refuse to answer particular questions, and to end the interview or withdraw from the study at any time. The participants also decided whether they wanted to be cited in a publication other than the thesis that resulted from the research.

Most of the individuals interviewed did not choose to remain anonymous. Those who chose anonymity tended to be in management positions, although a former foreman and a former worker chose anonymity at least in part because they feared that participation might compromise their retirement pension. The vast majority of interview participants consented to have the interview recording deposited in a public archive, although some placed time restrictions that would ensure the tapes were deposited after

their death. One person asked that the recording be destroyed because of their non-English accent. It is my goal to place as many of the recordings as possible in the public domain upon conclusion of the project.

The format of the interviews was formal in the sense that we sat down together with a recording device and I came with a list of open-ended questions on topics that I hoped to discuss, although the order of topics discussed was often determined by the interviewee as the conversation evolved in a free-ranging manner. A few interviews were conducted with two people present -- most often a husband and wife, but a mother and son and a mother and daughter in two other instances. I found that in these interviews it was more difficult to get a strong sense of the female partner's narrative voice because male participants tended to dominate. Most interviews lasted ninety minutes or longer and in a few cases I conducted a second or third interview, usually by telephone. A few participants, generally those who were more educated and held higher positions in the union or company, asked to review all parts of the text where they are cited. In May 2012 I gave a public lecture on this research at the Central Lion's Senior Centre in Edmonton. Upon completion of the study I will inform all participants of my findings and deposit copies of the thesis at Edmonton Public Library and the Provincial Archives of Alberta.